

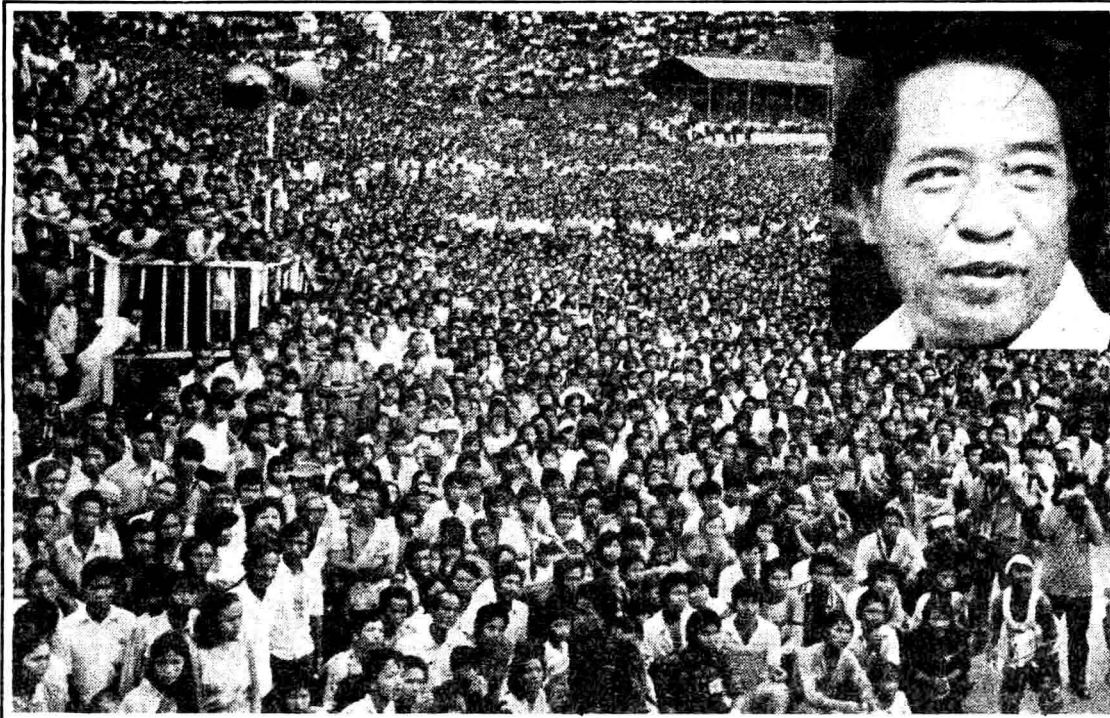
The Forum Gazette

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Mizos welcome the return of Laldenga to Aizwal.

Courtesy Statesman

Government, Mizos Achieve Settlement

The Accord and the Laldenga Conundrum

Harji Malik

MR LALDENG has signed the Memorandum of Settlement with the Government of India, which, according to him, is the first step towards peace in Mizoram. But there are tough times ahead. First Laldenga must persuade the Mizo National Army, 1000 strong according to his estimate, 600 according to others with 500 in Burma and 100 in Bangladesh, to 'turn in' their arms and ammunition. The Memorandum lays down that all of them must do so. After 20 years of bloody, bitter fighting, under severe hardships with all the tensions and deprivations insurgency brings, will the 'hard core' be willing to settle for statehood within the Indian Union? The MNF 'chief' states categorically that they will 'turn in' their arms, and he told *The Forum Gazette* that the discipline of the organisation is such that there has never been an instance in "which we have had to kill any of our men".

However, in 1971-72, after the creation of Bangladesh had deprived the Mizo insurgents of their East Pakistan sanctuary and training camps as well as arms supplies from Pakistan, when Laldenga's second in command surrendered with 300 men to the Indian security forces, many of them were killed by Laldenga's men and the errant commander was brutally murdered in Aizwal hospital. The split had come about because the men who surrendered felt that independence had become impossible and that dependence on China or Pakistan would leave them at the mercy of the two countries. They felt they would rather settle for statehood

within the Indian Union. Laldenga and his family had fled to Islamabad at that juncture.

Now, having settled for that same statehood, will Laldenga be able to persuade all the insurgents to come overground. There are reports that a section of the MNA is determined to continue the fight like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. The time frame is one month for the disarming operation. During this period Laldenga must also call the MNF together to change the organisation's constitution on the question of independence. Only after these two steps are completed can the ban on the MNF be lifted and the interim government, in which Laldenga is to share power with the Congress (I), take over. But problems are already surfacing. Although the Memorandum says nothing about a general amnesty for those who are still underground, Laldenga said in his first Aizwal press conference that the Lt. Governor had been asked by the Centre to announce such an amnesty. However this is questioned publicly by the ruling Congress (I) Mizoram Chief Minister.

Relations with Congress-I

The MNF's future relations with the Congress (I) will also pose problems. Although the agreement signed between the Congress (I) and the MNF, which preceded the Memorandum of Settlement, says that once the two steps mentioned above are implemented, Laldenga will take over as Chief Minister with the present Chief Minister as his Deputy, and that the Cabinet

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Barnala Denies Helping Congress-I

Blames Dissidents for Mann's Defeat

Baljit Malik

In an interview with the editors of *The Forum Gazette* held on Monday July 7 at Punjab Bhawan in New Delhi, the Punjab Chief Minister refuted the suggestion that his party had begun to show signs of political accommodation with the Congress-I. Sardar Surjit Singh Barnala also dismissed S. Prakash Singh Badal's charge that Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (ret'd) was a Congress-I plant in the Akali camp. The Chief Minister and President of the Akali Dal said that it was unfortunate and sad that such an allegation had been made against Gen. Aurora who was a recognised leader and spokesman for Sikhs outside Punjab, besides being a personality with an all-India reputation. (Mr. Badal's allegation is rather strange, considering Gen. Aurora's unflinching criticism of Operation Bluestar and the Congress-I's role in the November-84 carnage). He accused the dissidents of not trying hard enough to get even their own candidate, Simranjit Singh Mann, elected to the Rajya Sabha.

According to Sardar Surjit Singh, "they nominated their candidate without consulting us. They also did not seriously canvas for their candidate". "This goes to show that their intentions were neither clear nor honest" added the Chief Minister.

Sardar Surjit Singh told the *Gazette* "I met Tohra a few days before the election. We told him that a split should be avoided. The two sides should try for a

rapprochement". "We also made it known that if unity could be achieved, Simranjit Singh Mann's success in the election could also be arranged. But Tohra avoided the issue by insisting on votes for Mann first and unity later."

State of the Accord

Questioned about the state of the accord, Sardar Barnala said, "I won't say it is in a happy state. So far Chandigarh has not come to Punjab. There is almost a deadlock on the issue." The Chief Minister did not think it would be possible for the city to be transferred on July 15. There were no alternative solutions on hand at the moment. Earlier in the day he had informed Justice Desai that the Punjab government had rejected his commission and would not be making any submissions before it.

Asked to comment on reports that Punjab might give up its claim to Chandigarh and instead demand funds to build another capital, the Chief Minister dismissed such suggestions as being utterly impractical. He reaffirmed that Punjab's struggle for Chandigarh would go on.

Regarding the centre's constraints in pushing through with the accord, Barnala put his finger on the Mathew and Venkatramiah commissions, which, he felt, had made indecisive recommendations. He hoped that the Prime Minister would be able to deal with the problem politically.

Dialogue With AISSF

"For peace, understanding

goodwill in the state, we are willing to talk to anyone; we will do anything for that." "We have been trying to contact various groups in the AISSF, in fact many of the boys have met me. Except for the Kahlon group with whom we have not had a dialogue, they have all assured me that they would not take to arms." Sardar Barnala added, "The AISSF groups we have talked with have all said that they are against the killings."

Terrorist Killings

Responding to a specific question—who is responsible for the killings, the Chief Minister expressed the view that they (the killers) were drawn from among those who had fled to Pakistan

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S. Surjit Singh Barnala with S. Buta Singh and Shri Bansi Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana.



Courtesy: Statesman

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The Punjab Press Speaks to The Forum Gazette

A Report by Jasjit Purewal

Like all other aspects of the Punjab situation the Press must share a distinct responsibility in the present crisis. The Punjab Press has few parallels. In less than 40 years it has witnessed twice, socio-political upheavals which have threatened the very generic definition of Punjab and its people. In both instances its role has been controversial and the charge specific; 'communal', 'partisan', 'sensationalist'. The murders of Lala Jagat Narain and his son Romesh Chander of the famous Hind Samachar Group has both sparked and legitimized this controversy. Another interesting aspect of the Punjab Press is that despite Punjabi being the official language the largest circulation is in Hindi while Urdu still remains prominent, a poignant reminder of the Punjab of yesteryears.

The Jalandhar based Vernacular Press has an impressive 8 dailies to its credit with the largest share of circulation shared by the three oldest dailies, Hind Samachar (4,16,244) Pratap (55,000) and Ajit (1,25,000). Ironically, since all three are family-owned it is the second generation in each case who are facing the challenges of their founding fathers but with a difference. The following is an interview with the managing editors of the four major dailies: Vijay Kumar (Hind Samachar) Yash Pal (Milap), Chander Kumar (Vir Pratap) and Barjinder Singh (Ajit).

Why has the Punjab Press been repeatedly accused of being communal?

Vijay Kumar — Well if calling a spade a spade is communal then we may be guilty. Ours has been a very positive role in the present situation and we are from a group and family which has been outspoken against injustice of any nature. My father the late Lala Jagat Narain had joined the Akalis in their agitation against the Emergency rule and Romesh Chander had squarely blamed Mrs. Gandhi of accelerating the Punjab crisis. Today we are equally critical of the Akali role. It is actually this new breed of journalists who under the guise of investigative journalism cash in on sensa-

tionalism and communalism, in which case your Delhi Press is no exception. We in Punjab are increasingly aware of the delicacy of the situation.

Yash Pal — No! We are maligned but we have been discreet when we have had to. Though it seems that the youth have the ultimate say today; we are all defunct.

Chander Kumar — No! How can you call the role communal when whatever the Press has said has come to be. The minority community is facing the Akali Party who is zealously guarding or misguarding the interests of the Sikhs and causing uneasiness in the other community. It is they who are communal not the Press.

Barjinder Singh — The Press may have played a communal role but there is a context. Before partition Urdu was a neutral language for all Punjabis including Muslims but post-partition and particularly post-census the split became defined. Hindus read Hindi and Sikhs read Punjabi. The Akali struggle also banked on Sikh sympathy and began to communicate through the Punjabi media. I think that the older generation in the Punjab Press may have been inclined on communal lines perhaps to woo readership. Today there is a visible change, and the younger generation of editors have realized the implications of that trend.

Is the responsibility of the vernacular Press greater?

Vijay Kumar — Well the Press must and does thrive on objectivity, vernacular or otherwise.

Yash Pal — Language may well play a role because of the community it might finally reach.

Since our paper is in Urdu we don't have that problem and aim basically at both communities.

Chander Kumar — Yes a greater responsibility does lie with the vernacular Press and in this case the Punjab Press, and I think that the greater responsibility has been realized. In India given the ethnic differences and conflicts the line of discretion may be fine but the press must be aware of it.

Barjinder Singh — In any case the responsibility of the editor is far greater is striking a balance if language becomes synonymous with community. This is the strongest case for having a widely used official state language.

What do you see as the crux of the problem in Punjab today?

Vijay Kumar — Basically there is a problem with the unemployed youth, both Hindu and Sikh who actually wants a white collar job with little effort. Thus the influx of labour from Bihar and U.P. That element has been exploited through religious sentiment for political end.

Yash Pal — I think this is a malicious conspiracy by those who are jealous of Punjab. This is why the Hindu-Sikh riots started outside of Punjab. Now Akali apathy is largely to blame for this rampant lawlessness.

Chander Kumar — The Akalis have exploited Sikh sentiment and religion and succeeded in creating a rift between the Hindu and Sikhs. The unemployed youth may have taken to dacoity but they are not being criticized by their leaders. Continual propaganda against Hindu materialism, Operation Bluestar and the November riots all seem to have settled in the Sikh psyche but there has been no self-analysis either, just a feeling of hurt. All this has created a strong division between the two communities.

Barjinder Singh — Politicians and religious fundamentalists must share the blame for what has happened to Punjab today.

What about Hindu migration?

Vijay Kumar — The Akali Government is preoccupied with dissension and the Prime Minister is bothered only about the accord while there is a growing belt in Punjab where even the leaders are afraid to go. With the police, both partisan and dem-

oralised, there is no one to protect the Hindus. Migration is natural.

Yash Pal — It is a very complicated situation. Then terrorists have a plan to first drive out the Hindus and then all the moderate Sikhs from the border areas. This will then be their stronghold permanently. With police complicity and ineffective and corrupt security forces there is no one to check their activities. The Akalis do not seem particularly concerned about law and order and the Hindus then have little choice but to flee. The Sikhs in these areas, I found, do not want them to leave but are equally insecure.

Chander Kumar — The migration of Hindus will assume even greater proportions if this situation is not controlled soon. The police is ineffective, the security forces are confused and no one seems to be in charge. There just is no accountability.

Barjinder Singh — Whether it is Hindu migration from Punjab or Sikh migration into Punjab the problem lies with an ineffective government machinery.

What has been the role and impact of the Shiv Sena?

Vijay Kumar — Basically a Hindu youth resource which has not been tapped by the B.J.P. or the Congress and has therefore taken the shape of this disorganised group. They are ineffective and have been played up by the press outside Punjab. Their only contribution is to create further tension by making unnecessary speeches.

Yash Pal — A completely misdirected and disorganised group of young Hindus who see themselves as an answer to Sikh militancy.

Chander Kumar — They have no comprehensive leadership and the Hindu community may see them as a security blanket but they seem only to further the cause of communalism.

Barjinder Singh — A reaction

no doubt since it is not really an organised body yet. Their role so far has been negative since there is no leadership and they react sporadically and irresponsibly which finally just leads to hatred.

Is 'Khalistan' a possibility?

Yash Pal — No! But the Sikh psyche must be appeased after Bluestar and the riots, which is not being done. Irresponsible statements by Mr. Gandhi about falling trees and tremors don't help. Akali demands are just, and we do need water since agriculture is our mainstay.

Chander Kumar — Not a reality I can visualise but a very difficult period lies ahead for Punjab. Chandigarh must be given to Punjab and the issues of water and industry must be paid heed to immediately since our problems are basically economic.

Barjinder Singh — Not practical at all and not possible. In general Sikhs are not for Khalistan.

Where will Punjab go from here?

Vijay Kumar — There will be peace finally, may be in another 4 years.

Yash Pal — I think if Punjab has to return to normalcy the solution lies in President's rule may be for the next 10 years. No popular government can function here effectively and it is better to suffer a loss of rights than be sacrificed to this power struggle.

Chander Kumar — We are heading for social, economic and political disaster. Governor's rule may be our only refuge since no government has been able to guarantee security of life.

Barjinder Singh — At this stage a lot depends on the Centre and their implementation of the Accord. The Chandigarh issue and the Misra Commission are not exactly lending credibility to their commitment. If the Akalis cannot survive these challenges there will be total confusion.

The
Forum
Gazette

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Consulting Editors for Gazette



The Forum Gazette family has been added to with a panel of consulting editors.

Former Supreme Court judge and Minister of Education in the Kerala Left Government in the

fifties, Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, along with I.K. Gujral, Kuldip Nayar, Madhu Kishwar, Jaya Jaitly and Khushwant Singh, will be advising the paper as well as contributing to it.

LALDENG : "WE MUST ALL FEEL ONENESS"

Harji Malik

The signing of the Mizo National Front-Government of India Memorandum of Settlement by MNF leader Mr Laldenga and Union Home Secretary Mr R.D. Pradhan is a memorable event after 20 years of the bloodiest insurgency the country has witnessed. Mr Laldenga talked to *The Forum Gazette* on the eve of his departure for Aizwal.

Has peace come to Mizoram after 20 years of armed insurgency? On 1 March 1966 Mr Laldenga declared Mizo independence. On 5 July 1986, after having signed the Memorandum of Settlement with the Government of India against whom he had waged war, he stepped out of the helicopter at Aizwal's Tuireil airfield, no longer the leader of an insurgency but Chief Minister elect of Mizoram, soon to be the 23rd state of the Indian Union.

Immediately he was surrounded by a mass of young men wearing the olive green camouflaged battledress of the Mizo National Army — an extraordinary finale to the violence and killings of two decades. The Underground, part of it at least, had come overground in dramatic fashion, even when officially, the ban on the Mizo National Front and its army had not yet been lifted. This will only happen after all the insurgents have deposited their arms with the Central Government-designated authority and the MNF has changed its constitution which asserts independence.

..... to conform to the law. One era has ended, another has begun. The relief and jubilation in Mizoram is understandable as the people welcome normalcy after 20 years of uncertainty, insecurity, and almost uninterrupted state of emergency which made normal day to day living impossible and deprived Mizoram of economic development. But, interviewed by *The Forum Gazette*, Mr Laldenga warned "The accord does not automatically bring peace; the agreement is to start the process of peace".

Other excerpts from the interview follow:

Mr Laldenga, what are your feelings at signing the Memorandum of Settlement after 20 years struggle?

I am very happy because we have got what we worked for and so have achieved success.

Why did you give up your original demand for independence from India?

We never demanded independence, we declared our independence. We were never part of a rajah or maharajah or any ruler, state. Even the British kept us apart from India.

But you were part of Assam under the British.

We were directly under the Governor General (Viceroy) through the Governor of Assam. But we were never represented in the Assam Assembly or any other Assembly in India. Not even the Constituent Assembly. When the operation of the (Indian) Constitution was ex-

tended to us it was wrong because we had no representation. In early August 1947, before Indian independence, leaders of the Mizo religious, political and social organisations assembled and passed a resolution that if Mizoram was to join the Indian Union, we would do so subject to a minimum period of 10 years. After that we would have the right to secede. When India became independent these organisations resolved that the Indian flag should not fly inside Mizoram. They threatened to kill any person flying the Indian flag and for one week the Indian flag did not fly in Mizoram!

Why did you wait until 1966 to launch your struggle?

In 1957, ten years after our resolution, we started the Mizo Cultural Society. It was 'cultural' because if we had started a political organisation we would have run into opposition from all quarters. That organisation became the Mizo Famine Front and later the MNF.

But, Mr Laldenga, why did you change your demand for independence?

We had always said that we would welcome a constitutional arrangement with the government and when they offered this we were willing to negotiate.

Are you sure that all the MNA surrender their arms?

There is no question of 'surrender'. This is a Memorandum of Settlement and the MNA will 'turn in' their arms. (The MNF leader wanted the 'turning in' to be done to him but the government did not agree.

Those who have studied terrorism and insurgency say that both are like an addiction and impossible to give up. Are you sure all the MNA will agree to 'turning in' their arms? After all the Nagas did not do so and the insurgency there continues.

I am sure no one will disobey. We have a very good organisation, better than any other underground organisation. Never in 20 years has there been any incident in which we had to kill our own men. Another thing is that we have trained them all like the army. We have kept them as soldiers without any political influence.

If, as you say, there will be no armed MNA after the agreement, why has the Government of India asked you specifically for the assurance that the MNF will not extend support to the Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) of Tripura, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur and any other such groups?

The government wants to make sure, it does not want to take any chances. They know



Mr. and Mrs. Laldenga at Calcutta airport enroute to Mizoram.

that there are no divisions in the MNF but because there has been speculation in the press on these matters, the government has asked for these assurances. Brigadier Sailo has also suggested this possibility to the Government because he does not want a settlement and has told the government that a settlement with Laldenga is impossible and will not work!

What are provisions in the agreement which differ from the agreement between Nagaland and the Centre?

The government is wiser now than before and so some difficulties have been avoided. For example on the question of land and resources. In Nagaland although there is oil, drilling has not taken place because of the tussle between Nagaland and the Centre. Nagaland alone has the right to exploit oil resources, so now it is deprived of the oil royalties it could have. In the case of Mizoram the Central government will have the right to exploit any underground resources.

The agreement mentions safeguards in respect of religious and social practices of the Mizos' customary law and procedure, and the administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law. Does this mean that the Indian Penal Code will not apply in Mizoram?

The Penal Code will apply but where social and customary laws are concerned it will be Mizo Law. But as in other communities we will examine our customary laws and keep them in line with individual freedoms.

There is a great deal of interest in the agreement's provision for amnesty to all those members of the MNF and MNA who are in prison. Will this amnesty apply also to those who have been convicted of having killed government officials and others, who are serving their sentences?

The balance of all the terms being served by those convicted will be pardoned, if the offence was in connection with and during the time of disturbed conditions.

But that also applies to those convicted of murder and killing?

It applies to all offences 'in connection with and during the disturbed conditions'. That is the operative phrase. Any offences such as looting, rape, etc., not having connection with 'disturbed conditions' do not fall under this provision.

Have you dropped the demand for Greater Mizoram?

No, the demand for Greater Mizoram has not been scrapped. But for the purpose of the Memorandum of Settlement it has been set aside.

Do you expect any problem with the Congress during the elections?

There will be a coalition government during the interim period of six months. Then will come the elections. This interim period will be a *testing time* to see how things work out with the Congress. Beyond that we have no plans.

There has been a lot of misunderstanding between Mizos and the rest of the country and many things have happened to create bitterness in your people. How will you change this feeling?

Our first priority will be social reconstruction. We have to reconstruct the whole way of thinking of our people from 'disturbed conditions' to peace. It will take some time. We are giving priority to inculcating this new thinking for peace through social and religious organisations, through publicity and the media. Violence and corruption are always part of 'disturbed conditions', not just in Mizoram but anywhere, and they have to be tackled on a priority basis before we can have economic development.

How do you plan to do this?

Through schools and colleges. It is the young people, the students, who feel the most strongly. We will have to use every means to convince them and others that peace is possible only when there is peace with one's neighbour I repeat the agreement does not bring peace.

It is to start the process of bringing peace.

What means do you have in mind?

Through television. Through exchange of cultural troupes from other states so ours can go there and they can come here. We must all feel 'oneness'.

So you will have to get Doordarshan involved in your efforts?

Yes, we must. I will give you an example: a Central Minister went to Mizoram and asked a high school student who was the Prime Minister of India. The student replied General Zia! Because Pakistan TV beamed in to Mizoram long before Doordarshan and everyone watched it. Now we must have a direct link and make people known to each other. 'Fear of the unknown' creates fear and mistrust.

I remember a friend who has served in Mizoram telling me that Mizos hate India.

That is what we have to deal with on a priority basis.

Relaxed, with an easy manner, extremely articulate, the Mizo leader says with a broad smile that he is 59 years young! He has four children, the eldest, his 31 year old son, is married and working in Aizwal. The other three, brought up in England, are still there. A 26 year old daughter is a doctor, the younger son is working in industry, and the youngest, a 22 year old daughter is also working in England. Will they return? He does not know. His wife was in England with them and has returned to go with him to Aizwal. The young people will make up their own minds about what they do. Before his swearing in ceremony on August 12th when he will take the oath as Chief Minister along with members of his Cabinet, five of them from the Congress, four including himself from the MNF, he will go to England to visit the family. Family photographs cover the mantelpiece of his official bungalow in New Delhi where he has been living for the months of negotiation.

I wish him luck as we shake hands and he smiles "I need it" ■

Away From Antiseptic Civilization

An Experience with the Bastar Tribals.

Devdutt

DATELINE: BASTAR
15th June 1986:

Ringo, Ringo, Ringo ...
Riya, Riya, Riya Riya ...
Ringo, Ringo, Riya Riya ...

The *Sirah* the tribal 'doctor' in the unreserved forests of Madhya Pradesh was chanting these 'mantras' in the rapid rhythm of a superfast train rumbling over the rail track. The stillness and dark of the dense forest at midnight accentuated the eerie effect of the chantings which reverberated in the atmosphere with unusual force.

In front of Kanga's mud hut, in the courtyard a slow fire was burning. The *Sirah* sat cross-legged, shaking his whole body vigorously in wide circular motions. Kanga sat on his haunches near the *Sirah*, his hands folded, his face aglow with anxiety in the darkness. His wife, Sukhi, ten months pregnant, sat on the ground outside the courtyard. A small *diya* (earthen lamp) flickered near her as she moaned and writhed in the pains of labour. The rest of the members of the household, nearly seven in number, lay unmoving in their beds in the courtyard.

The *Sirah* chanted, "*Ringo Ringo, Riya Riya ...*" up to 2.30 a.m. never changing his tempo. Saliva and froth poured from his mouth; sweat from his face and streams of perspiration flowed down his back, chest and belly.



A tribal family in Madhya Pradesh

And Sukhi all alone, unattended-wailed in the light of the *diya* to deliver her baby. She reclined against the trunk of a tree, her feet apart, hands clutching her abdomen.

Time Stands Still

This is the heart of the unreserved forest 12 km away by *kucha* forest road and another 25 km of *pucca* road from the *tehsil* headquarters, the only place in the area

where medical aid can be obtained in an emergency.

For me time had stopped. The chantings of *Sirah*, the muffled groanings of Sukhi and the occasional stirrings of the birds on the trees and animals in the bush seemed infinite, eternal. A deep fear and helplessness filled my heart. Fear, because the labour pains had begun just as I had reached Kanga's hut at midnight after trekking 12 km

through a dark, lightless jungle path, led by 50 year old Baisakhi who carried to kg of *Mahua* on her head. I was apprehensive; what if some mishap takes place? How will Kanga's elders and other relatives relate my arrival with the probable mishap? Will they interpret my arrival as an ill omen?

Helplessness, because I was stuck, with nothing to be done in the heart of the dark night

to relieve or save a young woman in labour pains. The village in the thick forest is 37 km away from the nearest medical facilities. To get assistance would take at least 24 hours.

Anguished Helplessness ... and Optimism

We had never experienced such numb anguished helplessness. We had never seen such stoic heroism from a mother delivering her child herself with no assistance. My worshipful admiration and my spontaneous invocation to the benevolent and merciful aspects of nature outweighed my feelings of anguish and helplessness. A deep sense of calm optimism and reconciliation filled my heart. The *Sirah* kept up his chant, "*Ringo, Ringo, Riya Riya*". Sukhi continued to moan and groan; the *diya* gave out its flickering light and the fire smouldered on.

Suddenly, the *Sirah* stopped his chantings. "She will deliver within two hours. Let me go to sleep. I am tired he told Kanga. He lay down at the spot where he was sitting and covered his face with a piece of cloth, and instantly began to snore. The phonetic relief provided by the chantings of "*Ringo, Ringo, Riya ...*" vanished. The stillness of the dark forest and the night accentuated the impact of the groans of the mother in labour, alone outside the courtyard.

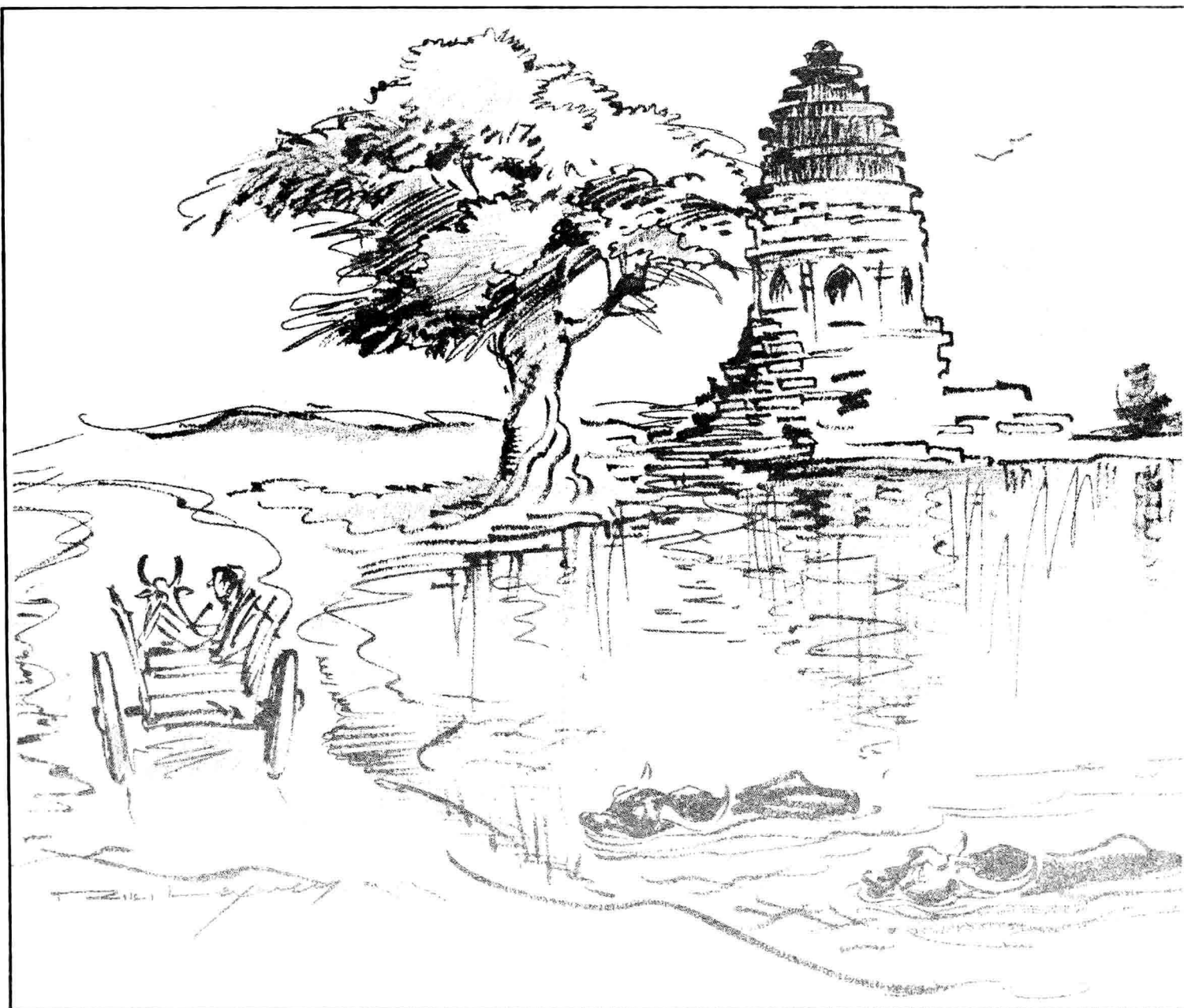
Kanga and I sat close to one another, our eyes fixed on the flickering *diya* near Sukhi. Our hearts beat fast with anxiety. I do not know how long we sat like this. But suddenly Sukhi stopped moaning. There was total silence, but only for a split second to be as suddenly enlivened by the cries of a new born baby. There it lay on the bare ground in the glow of the *diya*, its tiny rosy arms and legs waving in the air. Kanga looked at me, held my shoulders and said, "Sahib, it is all well." I was still in a trance.

Other members of Kanga's household were still awake. They now got up and sat in a circle. An elder woman of the house went close to Sukhi, bent down and caressed the baby, then called out to her son and asked for something. He brought an arrow and gave it to her. She sat near the now yelling baby on the bare ground, and in the light of *diya*, I saw her cut the umbilical chord with the arrow. Sukhi collected herself, picked up the baby and walked into a small hut constructed outside the courtyard of Kanga's hut. She would live alone, cook her own food, feed her baby all by herself, for eight days.

Life Flows On

What we saw in the course of our visit to this unreserved and not easily accessible forest village on 9th June 1986, happens to thousands of families in this forest. Thousands of mothers experience this creative pain;

Continued on page 5, col. 1





Back from the market. Bastar.

Continued from page. 4

thousands of children born in these primitive conditions are strong and healthy. Thousands of women go back to work on farms and fields after eight days. Life flows on as freely, purely and as hazardously as the streams and waterfalls in the area.

We wonder, what is the secret of Sukhi's survival? What is the secret of regeneration of thousands of Sukhi's in India's rural and forest regions, its mountain areas and deserts, which are far away in mind, space and time from the highly protected antiseptic, cotton-wool civilisation we are building at such heavy cost in the cities and towns. **Is it the innate spiritual potential of motherhood and the will to love that helped Sukhi? Is it the intrinsic faith in the benevolent powers of nature which enabled Sukhi's husband to endure the sight of his wife giving birth unaided under the tree? Is it the inexhaustible patience to suffer and to reconcile with crisis? Or does Sukhi's case suggest that in the ultimate human beings are condemned to suffer in absolute aloneness and solitariness?**

Another way of looking at

Sukhi's case is that Sukhi had no choice. The planning process in India by-passed Sukhi's forest village. So the only option open to her was to deliver her baby without medical and other assistance and to fall back upon her own spiritual psychological and physical resources.

On the basis of this argument, it follows that the only way to help Sukhi and millions like her in India is to accelerate the extension of the modern developmental process in the forest and rural areas. Those who believe in egalitarian values would be justified in using Sukhi's experience to renew their attack on the exploitative and lop-sided character of the system and of developmental processes in India since 1947. They would also be justified in ridiculing the slogan of the twenty first century raised by a leadership which has never known reality first hand and which acquires its knowledge either through films or through flying visits to the tribal areas.

Whatever the obvious difference between those two approaches, there is no disagreement about the failure of the modern developmental model to deal with problems faced by people like Sukhi. But nor is it right to glorify the case of Sukhi

for it is accepted that cultural values do not emerge in a vacuum; they are determined by objective conditions. Therefore availability of medical and other aids for child birth determine the rituals relating to child birth. This appears also to other rituals.

But Sukhi's case also points to a greater truth which is not generally perceived viz, that human beings in direct communication and harmony with nature and the cosmic law, do not require man-made artifacts and technology for performing certain primary, elementary functions, including child-bearing and child-rearing. Therefore, it is neither a miracle nor a fluke that millions of women like Sukhi, who are uncorrupted by 'civilisation', who retain their close relationship to laws of nature and order their lives conforming to the cultural values their ancestors derived from the basic laws of nature, can endure pain and tribulation with dignity and without the aid of technology.

An Unfailing Friend

Nature, in its deepest sense, is an unfailing friend, philosopher and guide of human beings. Sukhi's case shows that our tribal brethren, in remote rural areas and the millions of other Indians who still live outside the bounds of the modern developmental process, including those below the poverty line, survive because of nature's creative and regenerative resources and also because they have developed certain natural cultural attitudes specially towards physical and psychological crises and conditions. They believe that since a crisis has a therapeutic value, it must not be feared; on the contrary, it must be allowed to run its natural course and not be short-circuited or suppressed instantly.

Fundamental Question

This raises of fundamental question: should the modern medical system, which is an inseparable part of today's developmental process, reflected in India's Five Year Plans since 1952 be rejected? Should we allow millions of mothers in India to go through Sukhi's experience? Is that not a phi-

losophy of cruelty?

All of us desire the welfare and happiness of our deprived brethren. But some of us have realised, and Sukhi's example confirms our realisation, that the present model of development has been doubly harmful to them. First, it destroys the healthy organic relationship that exists between human beings and nature and the cosmic laws, and thus undermines the intrinsic strength of human beings. It generates a set of wrong cultural values. It interferes with particular cultural attitudes towards pain, discomfort and crisis. Brought up in the so-called modern way we are frightened of things like hobgoblin; we fear nature and treat it as an adversary which should be conquered and tamed, as if it is an enemy. Consequently, we are building up a high cost defensive, antiseptic civilisation — deodorized, pastuerized, immunized, sterilized — into which nature is not permitted to intrude. The result is that modern human beings have become vulnerable, dependent and helpless. They have lost their autonomy and dignity. Second-

The drawings on these pages are by R.K. Laxman from his book: *Madhya Pradesh — Random Sketches*. Published by Madhya Pradesh Madhyam, 1985.

ly it is not possible to cover the entire country's population with this antiseptic model of development even within a century. As if this was not bad enough, the model of development we have chosen is totally inimical to the Sukhi's of India. They are the first victims of the dynamics of modern development.

Therefore, Sukhi's experience should compel us to reject the modern model of development and inspire us to look for an alternative model. A model which rests on the organic harmony between man, nature and cosmic laws which harnesses and develops the intrinsic psychic and spiritual powers of human-beings, which is based on a fearless approach to nature, which accepts nature and exploits the therapeutic value of crisis for overcoming any difficulties nature may engender. ■

The gnarled face of a tribal



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Rabindranath Tagore : Artist Supreme

Vibha Sharma

In Rabindranath Tagore, one finds the artist supreme. Endowed with the pure, delimited aesthetic sensibility of an artistic creator he fulfilled himself in his lifetime, in composing the rhythm of an enchanting music, the cadence of a soul-stirring poetry, and also, in the realm of pure visual art.

On the occasion of Tagore's 125th birth anniversary, art lovers of Delhi had the happy fortune to view some hundred odd drawings, sketches and paintings by him at the National Gallery of Modern Art.

"My pictures are my versification, in lines" — From a suffusion of black ink strokes, held in dynamic tension within the four edges of the frame, semi-real faces come into their own, as the interplay of the light of the paper and the dark of the ink produce the abstract semblance of eyes, lips, hair... enmeshed in the throes of an inner turmoil.

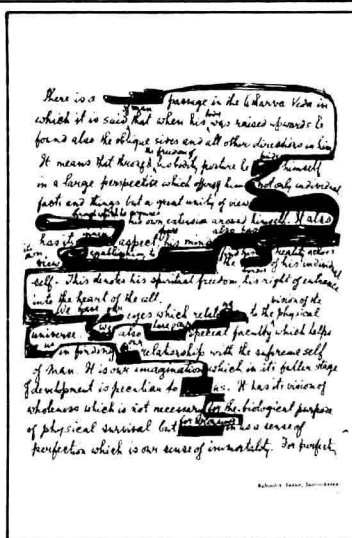
There is more than a meta-physical affinity between Tagore's verse and his art; Tagore's drawings literally took shape on his manuscripts as he wove the erasures on his manuscripts into a pattern and shape discovering that, "in the universe of

A page from the manuscript of
Raktakaravi.



Woman's Face

forms there is a perpetual activity of natural selection in lines, and only the fittest survives which has in itself the fitness of cadence" and that the "inter related balance of fulfilment is creation itself."



From the Religion of Man.
Erasures on a manuscript.

Thus, the strong cubistic geometry of *Seven Figures* delineates in its sharp angles and unsparring straight lines the quintessential rownness of human afflictions. An array of faces, grotesque and personal, figures real, fantastic and cubistic, all partake of the drama of a personal, emotional phantasmagoria. Masks of sarcasm, masks of terror, wrinkled folds of age, oval moon-faces of silent lips and eyes to transfix — are all entities belonging as much to the state of awakening as to that of dreaming... Embodiments of deep moods reflected in titles like *Brooding* and figures in waiting at a window materialised out of vague and dark mysterious depths, improbable protagonists of a private melodrama. The diffused softened glow of landscapes lit up with light touches of yellow and green to impart a sense of wholeness of Nature.

Through the highly connotative associations of imagery and colour, the rich and complex sensibility of the artist becomes manifest in a way that only the liberty of visual syntax affords.

A memorable exhibition, which hopefully will be repeated to enable those who missed it to take in a rare aspect of Rabindranath's genius.

"NEW DELHI TIMES" A Film that Failed

B.S. Rattan

The film was released — "uncut", says the blurb — in May after being withdrawn from Doordarshan at the eleventh hour a month ago. This gave the film a free publicity build-up. Mystery and expectations thus raised, though apparently preparing a ready audience or the film, actually proved detrimental because the film fails miserably on more than one count.

Cinema, as a mode of artistic communication, offers a unique technical challenge. It is not enough to pick up a radical theme. An equally radical use of cinematic techniques is necessary, if such a theme is not to be muffled up in easy rhetorical slogans and utter simplifications. This is precisely what happens to this film.

The techniques of cinema if handled honestly, that is, without succumbing to glamour which is inherent in cinema, can be a mode of discovery. The director of "New Delhi Times" obviously lacks this creative gumption. Hence, he uses gimmicks that reduce the film to a typical commercial pot-boiler — and a very poor one at that too — besides offering a very distorted and superficial explanation of the political malady engulfing us.

Politics has been totally criminalized. This is the thematic statement the film seems to make. How does it add to what we know, and have known far more virulently and grimly in our lives during the last four years? In fact the film mocks at what has been our agonizing experience in real life. Staging a riots-scene and showing a man in flames is vulgarity of a very low order because compared with our actual living experience of the terror of being burnt alive, these scenes merely sensationalize. We also know how ruthlessly efficient has been the nexus between the media and the politicians during the last decade. To present a situation in which a plush life-style journalist is at logger's head with the politically ambitious is giving a kind of pseudo-analysis which blunts rather than sharpens our understanding of the political chaos enveloping us.

Dangerous Political Thriller

The film has been officially captioned as "A Political Thriller". Yes, it is political, but in a far more dangerous sense than what it pretends to be. It is dangerous because in the garb of simplicity it detracts attention

from the real understanding of political chicanery, and, thus, mischievously perpetuates it.

The film uses all the tricks of a crime thriller, and does more harm than good because it pretends to generate an awareness, which, in truth, is false. An ordinary crime thriller does not harm because we participate in it with a willing suspension of disbelief. This film, however, asks us to believe in it simply because it is framed in such simple terms under a false myth that people cannot understand complexity. The film has been rejected by the common audience instinctively, though they cannot articulate their rejection analytically. Only the pseudo-intellectuals are busy projecting the film as 'meaningful'. A little more careful examination will reveal the 'fraud' that this film seeks to perpetrate.

Name any of the well-known thriller-gimmicks, and you have them in this film — heavy rains, swinging lights, plush interiors, three-tier sitting rooms, a beautiful dissuading wife, the only child away at boarding school and in danger of being kidnapped; cars running, accidents, a plump woman strip-teasing in the background while vital information is being passed amidst garish lights, smoke and clinking glasses. A bed-room scene with man in climbing posture, a heavy sonorous sound-track interspersed with all kinds of creepy, metallic noises, a heart-attack with its sentimental appeal. All the evil characters in a typical devilish grin and muscle-display while all the good ones cherubic in expression, terror writ large on faces brought home by hand held camera. In the context of the mock-seriousness of the film, these tricks also fail to excite, as they do in crime-thrillers.

Politics is choking out all values from our lives because it operates with such smoothness and such technological fineness. By superficially presenting evil as obviously repulsive the film succeeds only in distracting us from tearing off the masks from the evil. This film is itself an instance of the enormous damage that the canker of corruption, easy praise and quick success have done to our society.

The only happy sign is that the masses have rejected the film, though without knowing why. Only the 'learned' elite is pretending to be catharsised by this film in an auto-congratulatory manner — uttering excited animal cries of "ows" & "wows". ■

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Admissions Time at Delhi University

Tarun K. Saint

Is College 'a three year paid holiday' as **Rahul Karna** applying for the M.A. History course regards it? Or 'a period of concentrated study, more thorough than at school' as **Bhaghirathi Sharma**, from Delhi Public School, hopefully expects? Either way, the rush for college admissions is on, heavier this year than ever before at Delhi University. Myriad young faces, eager and anxious, are rushing from college to college in the heat of July. Will the fee-receipt be finally held in hand, with a sigh of relief? The variables taken into account before the correct equation is found are sometimes heartbreakingly complex.

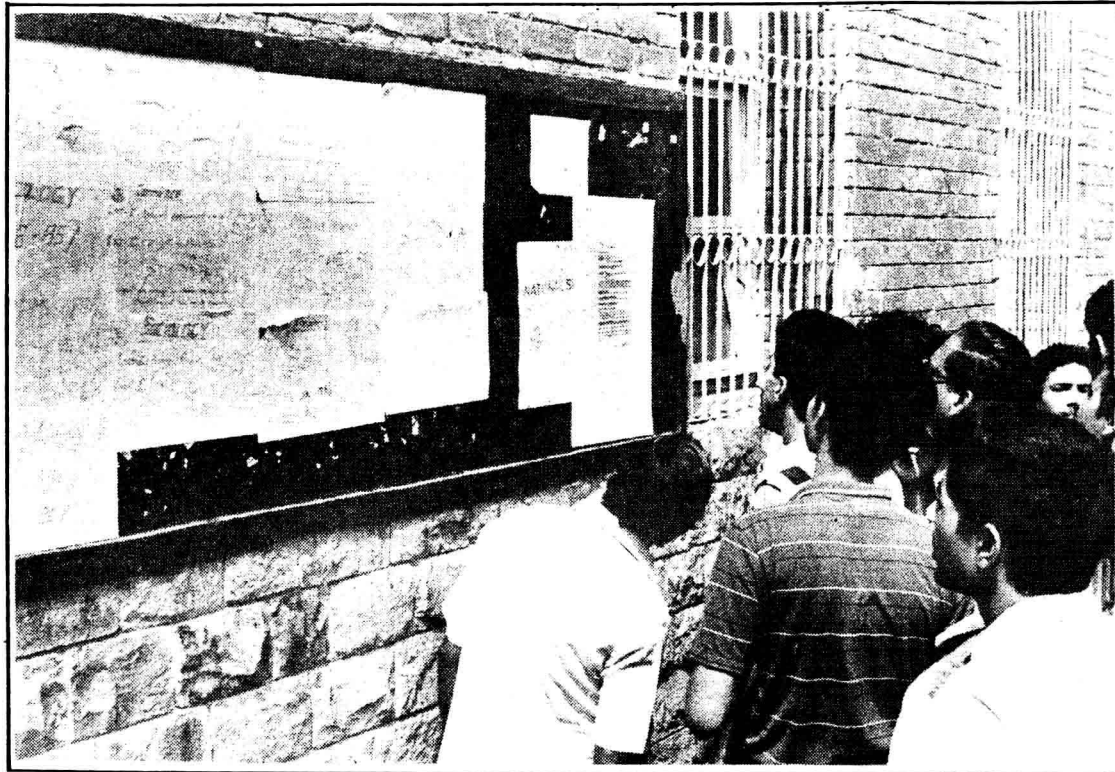
Education implies rational thinking, discipline and balance. As the new batch enters college, their views and aspirations acquire importance at a time sadly lacking in these attributes. A cross-selection of 'freshers' interviewed during the admissions rush spoke of their problems and expectations.

What is a college career about? Most people were vague in their responses. Does this point to a general carelessness amongst school going students about their future? Graduation is 'required', 'has to be done', are the attitudes found all too often in those applying even at prestigious institutions like Hindu College and St. Stephen's Col-

lege. This curious lack of interest may lead to cynicism. For the college student quickly finds that accomplishments in college are at one's own initiative; there is little of the constant encouragement received at school. Too often attending classes becomes an easily neglected part of 'college life' which is 'free and fun'. Even those with extra curricular talents or those good at sports lose their initiative in the face of the slower moving pace,

and prefer to have 'a good time'. Very few colleges offer the kind of year-round activity that can keep up interest of college boys and girls and generate involvement. Many students, including **Shantanu Prasad** of St. Columbus School, Delhi regard college as a stepping stone, with only the competitive exams in mind. **Shantanu** does not think the faculty can offer him much even academically; he will have to study on his own. An interesting side-light was his apprehension of another strike by the teachers. Delhi University's reputation of clear academic years appears to have been lost after two long protracted strikes by the D.U.T.A. in the last four years.

Securing admissions is often a tortuous process as many applicants strongly affirmed. The variation in policies and percentages in different colleges forces the applicants to run around. **Raakhi Handa**, applying for History (Honours), had already made eight trips to the north campus from her home in Saket, and expected to make at least two more. With the first list up on July 1st, the second on the 5th and interviews being held in St. Stephen's College between the 1st and 8th, confusion reigned. An added complication was that most colleges required original certificates to be deposited,



Waiting for admission to Delhi University.

Photos: Vivek Bhatia

long time interest. His final decision is to drop a year, and switch, a step not many dare to take. **Milind** appreciates a Humanities degree which he feels lead to a broad outlook and a variety of interests. For him participation in extra-curricular activities like drama and debating are an important part of college life, though he feels this is more a continuation of school interests.

Manoj Rao, from the M.S. College, Champaran, Bihar faces discrepancies between the criteria listed and the decisions of those in charge of admissions. He had travelled hundreds of kilometres and is staying at a hotel spending Rs. 50 a day with the hope of studying Political Science. For **Manoj**, residence will be a further problem: for example Hindu College has just 180 seats, with a strength of 1800. The percentage for hostel admission is rarely below 83% and it is decided long after college admission. Dozens of out-station students are forced to rent rooms or stay with relatives, for the situation is as bad or worse at other colleges, barring St. Stephen's.

This year applicants for a post graduate degree are going through a period of agonizing uncertainty. Most results of the previous years' examination had not been declared by the 5th July and the last date for registration is July 8th. **Aditya Singh**, applying for a seat at the Delhi School of Economics after B.A. (Economics) Honours at Hindu College, was studying for the entrance test without knowing if it would be required of him or not, since those with 60% and above were exempted. This too is the backwash of the two and a half month strike last year and the consequent postponement of examinations. Thousands of graduates have their careers hanging in the balance, for everything depends on the third-year results.

Problems are faced by all and aspirations are not as different as might be expected. But new entrants show a wide range of

opinions when asked for views on a problem of national importance—the Punjab issue.

Students from Bihar are the majority in most hostels in the University. **Manoj Rao**, as a future Delhi University student, is actively concerned. According to him, the youth in Bihar are very conscious of issues. Presently, all eyes are on Punjab. **Manoj** stated that the Prime Minister should take firm decisions like the late Mrs. Gandhi, since new demands seemed to come up with each settlement. The Sikhs, a brave people, are part of a free state in a free nation.

Manoj visualises a strong role for the youth. A national leader like the late **Jayaprakash Narayan** could unite the youth and utilise their power. He cited the example of the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini in Bihar. Student organisations are active even at school level in his state.

Deepak Sharma, a public school product, is candid about the lack of interest and involvement in such issues at school. He reads the newspapers, but few of his friends do so, or think seriously about the turmoil in the North. **Deepak's** view is that the Prime Minister should concentrate on solving the Punjab problem rather than worrying about South Africa. He has not thought about youth playing a part.

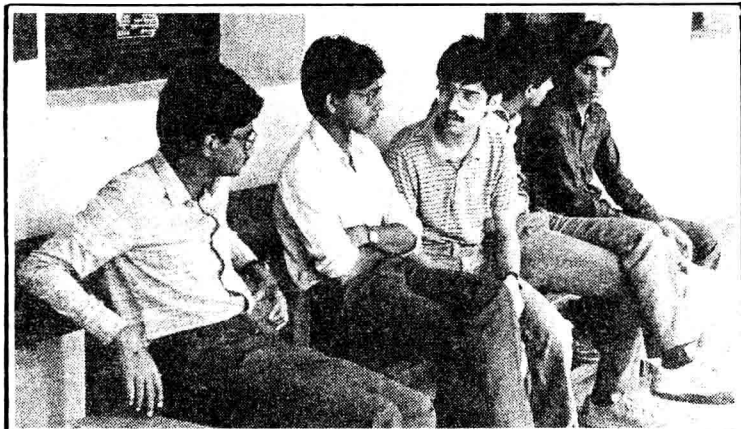
Raakhi Handa, of Delhi Public School also feels that the educated youth can do little except talk with others and raise consciousness. However, it is the uneducated who get swayed

easily by orators. The threat of terrorists should be rapidly countered she says. Perhaps organized groups could stop the migration of Hindus which she feels is a dangerous trend.

Another Delhi student, **Shantanu Prasad**, supports Mr. Barnala's efforts, although he feels the Punjab government should complete the Sutlej Canal before the transfer of Chandigarh. **Shantanu** wants Hindu communal organisations like the Shiv Sena to be banned. The Hindu youth should not counter the AISSF with violence and the Sikh youth must be brought on the side of national integrity.

The girls interviewed, by and large, have no comment on the issue. **Milind Wakankar** had stopped worrying about Punjab after repetitive news in the papers. **Kulpreet Singh** of Mata Jai Kaur Public School said politics did not interest him, though it was a shame on us if the issue was not resolved.

It is difficult to describe a typical college applicant. The wide spectrum of people met precludes easy classifications. But certain patterns do emerge, depending on the background of the future college students. The mingling of different people with a wide range of ideas, experiences and aspirations is part of the uniqueness of college life. Nevertheless, the admissions system requires stream lining, and the scope for a rewarding and effective three years could considerably be broadened. In the meantime, the 'fresh' batch moves forward to meet the new academic year.



lege. This curious lack of interest may lead to cynicism. For the college student quickly finds that accomplishments in college are at one's own initiative; there is little of the constant encouragement received at school. Too often attending classes becomes an easily neglected part of 'college life' which is 'free and fun'. Even those with extra curricular talents or those good at sports lose their initiative in the face of the slower moving pace,

and retrieval of these vital documents later was not easy. **Raakhi** said angrily that the entire process could be simplified and made uniform.

Deepak Sharma, from Mayo College, Ajmer is applying for admission through the sports category. His experience is that the admissions are preselected and trials an elaborate farce. **Deepak** said that overall achievement should also be included in the criteria for admission. An ex-school captain with a fine record in sports and debating and a 69% aggregate, he is still facing problems due to the present system of cut off percentage. Many students simply secured admission in a particular course because their aggregate percentage was within the cut-off at a 'reputed' college and later they faced problems because they lacked genuine interest in the subject.

Milind Wakankar, has completed a year at St. Stephen's College with B.A. (Pass) as his option. Now finding the course not challenging enough, he has decided to opt for English (Honours) at Kirori Mal College. English Literature has been his



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Politics of Discord and Desperation

The Punjab accord is, unfortunately, fast running out of steam. It has not only come under fire from its well known detractors at the Centre and in the state, but is also being ill-served by its chief patrons: Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and certain factions and leaders of the Akali Dal.

The Prime Minister has failed to galvanise his ideals and statecraft to give the accord a political push forward. He has also not been successful in preventing the various issues which constitute the Punjab tangle from getting bogged down in technicalities and legalities before a series of commissions.

It is also not encouraging to witness the spectacle of the Prime Minister of a sub-continental multinational nation such as India functioning in the manner of a mere party leader. To give him the benefit of the doubt, it may be conceded that he *wants* to develop into a leader of national stature, but is *prevented* from doing so by the small people around him. However, on his part Mr. Gandhi has not deviated from believing that the mass base of his political appeal lies in the nation's northern Hindi belt.

Thus, to quote Darshan Singh Maini (Tribune, Monday, July 7), "*The Centre has made Haryana's cause its own, and it would go on 'monkeying' with the Rajiv-Longowal accord till it fades out of existence...*"

The impression has also spread that the various commissions are being 'fixed' in such a way as to protect what is seen as Haryana's interest — whatever the fall-out of such 'fixing' on the accord and on peace in Punjab. Such 'management' of the functioning of commissions is one of Mrs. Gandhi's less edifying legacies to the art of government in India. Her political moves were often based on promising those whose support she was soliciting that *the findings of a commission into a dispute would be guaranteed in advance*. And so it was that Fazilka and Abohar were earmarked by her and the Shah Commission for transfer to Haryana.

Had Rajiv Gandhi succeeded in breaking with his mother's political 'philosophy' the farce of the Mathew and Venkataramiah commissions would have been avoided; Chandigarh would have been transferred by now to Punjab and the decks cleared for a dialogue with most if not all sections of political opinion in Punjab. But as things stand, the Barnala government has been pushed into a political cul-de-sac and the temper in Punjab has moved further toward desperation and confrontation.

It is true that the Congress-I is still intact in Haryana. But the critical question is: At what cost?

Notwithstanding his commitment to clean politics and a modern outlook, Mr. Gandhi has been swayed by less than praiseworthy political compulsions to pretend that the carnage of Sikhs in

November 1984 was a non-event. The P.M. appears to have forgotten that the accord also aimed at restoring the trust that had been broken between Punjab and the Centre and between the government of India and the Sikh people. His government's refusal to act against those guilty of the carnage has also resulted in a setback for the accord. Perhaps Mr. Gandhi is a prisoner of his party's immoral political culture. The accord will find it difficult to move forward if the Centre and those who clamour for an iron-fisted Punjab policy, continue to treat Punjab with double standards. For the reality is that whereas Sant Longowal came out openly against communalism and terrorism, Rajiv Gandhi has so far not shown the same courage or ability to isolate the criminal and chauvinist elements in and around his party.

An essential precondition for a settlement in Punjab, accord or no accord, is that the people do not see their leaders as being at the beck and call of New Delhi. The political impasse cannot be broken without a political initiative which satisfies the regional demand for more genuine federalism within the constitution. In this Mr. Badal *does* have a point.

The accord will also fail if the Akali party, whichever its faction, allows itself to be mesmerised by tempting overtures to share power with the Congress-I. It will also fail if leaders like Prakash Singh Badal allow themselves to fall into the trap of projecting Sikh alienation and anger as the only basic issue in Punjab. They forget that there can be no solution in Punjab unless they are also heard and seen to be speaking for the sizeable and vocal Hindu community.

The accord must save Punjab by helping the state to recapture its Punjabi consciousness, which is greater and richer than Sikh fundamentalism and Hindu fanaticism put together. To defend Punjab is more important than to defend the Congress-I or a faction-ridden Akali Dal. It is thus unfortunate that in the recent Rajya Sabha poll an effort was not made to keep the Congress-I out by mobilising opinion in favour of a second candidate, apart from Gen. Aurora, who would have been acceptable to both sections of the Akali Dal as well as Punjabi-minded Hindus.

It is also high time that the Prime Minister was advised to avoid giving the impression that the Barnala government only acts decisively when pressured from New Delhi. Not only is such an impression erroneous, but it can also erode the credibility of the state government in the eyes of the Punjabi people.

The stakes are too high in Punjab for the Prime Minister of India to act like a regional politician and for regional leaders to speak for only one section of the population.

Emerging Political Pointers in Punjab

Implications of Rajya Sabha Poll Results

Rajinder Puri

One of the country's foremost political commentators, Rajinder Puri poses the question whether or not the Congress-I is primarily responsible for creating, intensifying and prolonging the Punjab crisis. He also questions the logic of the Barnala group's role in helping the Congress-I win the second Rajya Sabha seat from the state.



The recent Rajya Sabha elections in Punjab have proved to be crucial. The results could have far-reaching consequences. They may have created the base for a future polarisation of politics in the country so deep and fundamental as to alter the very system of government by which we are ruled.

The Punjab poll gained significance from the candidature of Simranjit Singh Mann, who was put up by the Badal group. Mann was by any reckoning a controversial candidate. Had the Barnala government gone half-way in an effort to forge unity, it is arguable that another candidate mutually acceptable to both factions could have been found. But these will be the 'ifs' and 'buts' of history. Mann contested the election and lost narrowly. Thereby, instead of two Akali candidates, only one became victorious. The Congress(I) won the 'other' seat. The entire sordid episode revealed all the principal characters and parties in a very poor light. And the situation now has been pushed towards polarisation, perhaps towards confrontation and destabilisation. Let's take a look at the scorecard to see how each participant performed.

PM's Volte-Face

The Congress(I) gained most in the short term. It got what it wanted. It stopped Mann and obtained victory for its own candidate. It also got the open support of the BJP, and the barely concealed support of the Barnala government against the rival Akali candidate. Whether people choose to recognise it or not, this has created a sea-change in the political situation. The battlelines now are clearly drawn. Each party has made its choice.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi appeared to be a most satisfied man and made no attempt to disguise his brazen volte-face on the issue of terrorism in Punjab. A few days before the poll, the P.M. was telephoning the Punjab C.M. and issuing public warnings to him that unless he handled the terrorists and the law and order situation more effectively, his days were numbered. The harassed and struggling Barnala could do little on

that front. But he did succeed in blocking Mann from the Rajya Sabha. That apparently was enough for the Prime Minister. After the Rajya Sabha results the P.M. was oozing milk and honey. He publicly described Barnala as the bravest chief minister in the country bar none. He also opined that the C.M. had taken effective steps on law and order to curb the terrorists. What those steps were remained a mystery as daily accounts of six to a dozen victims being shot by terrorists continued to hog the front page of newspapers each morning. But such is the logic of expedient politics. Barnala toed the PM's line on Mann, hey presto, Barnala became the best!

Barnala's Role

Poor Barnala is still making the motions of walking a tightrope, little realising that he has already fallen off it. His most recent gesture of boycotting the Desai Commission will not fool anyone. When the chips were down, he helped the Congress(I) candidate win the Rajya Sabha election. Barnala canvassed with the BJP MLAs to cast their first preference votes for Aurora, and second preference votes for Hanspal, the Congress(I) candidate. Now why should Barnala have done that? Aurora was winning comfortably on the first preference vote anyhow. But for sake of the Congress(I), Barnala had to initiate a dialogue. Thus the name of Hanspal thrown in almost covertly. The ugly rumours of two BJP leaders having pocketed money we may ignore. In fact, Barnala was lobbying for the Congress(I) candidate because he could not persuade even his most pliant Akali legislators to support the Congress(I). Why then should not the Prime Minister have been pleased enough to describe Barnala the bravest CM in the country?

Pathetic BJP

The BJP was the most pathetic. The Punjab State Executive of the BJP had resolved to abstain from voting in the Rajya Sabha poll because the party, in its public posture at least, was against both the Congress(I) and the Akalis. Mann, of course, was out of question. Had that decision been followed, the BJP abstention would have ensured the victory of Mann over Hanspal. That was why Barnala's intervention on behalf of the Congress(I) became so crucial. Meanwhile, the Congress(I) ma-

Continued on page 9, col. 1

Emerging Political Pointers . . .

Continued from page. 8

chine had swung into action in Delhi too. The central leaders of the BJP, who had first considered an inquiry into the violation of the state executive resolution to abstain from voting, quickly changed their tune. Indeed, after the poll, the Punjab leaders were actually reprimanded by the central leaders for not having cast their first preference votes for Hanspal. Advani and Kedarnath Sahni were the most strident in their admonition, the most hawkish in their pro-Congress(I) posture. Their only regret was that they had not obtained a written guarantee from the Congress(I) for reciprocal support in a future poll in Jalandhar.

And this brings us to the basic question. Why did Mann become so important? Because to block him it became unavoidable, in the later stages of the election, to help the Congress(I) win. In effect, parties were forced to choose the lesser evil. Barnala and the BJP chose the Congress(I) as the lesser evil. None of them even bargained with the Congress(I) to agree on any mutually accepted compromise candidate. By their abstention from voting, or from casting the second preference vote, both parties could have kept their records clean, and could not have been held responsible for Mann's victory, which would have been squarely attributed to the Congress(I) intransigence over an agreed common candidate. The attempt was not even made. The BJP was sorry after the event that it had not cast its first preference vote for Hanspal, and Barnala resorted to devious parleys with BJP legislators in order to balance his own uncontrolled MLAs who insisted in casting their second preference votes for Mann. Therefore, it was not just a case of opposing Mann. The choice indicated clear recognition by both the BJP and the Barnala group of a stark proposition: in the given Punjab situation, both parties are compelled to unflinchingly support the Congress(I). And Simranjit Singh Mann became the symbolic rationale for that decision.

Fundamental Questions

This brings us to some fundamental questions on which people can have honest differences. First is, or is not, the Congress(I) primarily responsible for creating, intensifying and prolonging the Punjab crisis? How can those, who consider Bhindranwale guilty, at the same time exonerate the Congress(I) for encouraging him and even guiding him at the most decisive early stage, to actually vote for the Congress(I) candidate now? I am sure that people would argue, "Ah, but this is the case of Mann, a known terrorist! Why not support the Congress(I) against him?"

A known terrorist? First he was accused of complicity in the Indira Gandhi assassination case. But in court the prosecution steered clear of reference to him. The court found no evidence of any crime committed by him and the charges against him were dismissed. He continues to be detained under the draco-

nian laws promulgated to maintain security in the state by which the Government virtually is not answerable to anyone. Are we to take it then that Mann is a terrorist simply because the Congress(I) Government has decided this?

What Kind of Government

And what kind of Government is it? Is it not the same Government which justified the November riots in Delhi through a bland reference by the PM himself when thousands of innocents were slain as the police looked on when not directing and encouraging the mob? Is it not the same Government which not only did not challenge in a court of law public allegations that some of its leaders had engineered those riots, but subsequently made those very persons so accused ministers in the Central Government? Is it not the same Government which continues to hold in jail without trial thousands of Sikh youth arrested on charges no more serious than those levelled at one time against the late Harchand Singh Longowal, Barnala, Tohra and Badal, who were all released and allowed to contest elections? Is it not the same Government which completed the trial against two accused in the Indira Gandhi assassination case, after which it arrested a third person for complicity in the assassination, a person whose name figures nowhere in the events reconstructed in court by the prosecution, rendering the entire affair farcical? Is it not the same Government which by special ordinance has kept from public scrutiny the contents of the Thakkar Commission Inquiry Report on Indira Gandhi's assassination? . . . One can go on, and on.

We cannot state whether Mann is innocent. We know that as yet he has not been proved guilty. But we cannot state whether the Congress(I) Government is innocent either. We do know that there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to warrant an inquiry to clear the Government's name of genocide, butchery and tampering with the truth.

Two opinions

We cannot absolve the terrorists and extremists. But their crimes cannot exonerate the black deeds of the Congress(I) Government. There are two opinions about whose is the prime guilt for the present situation in Punjab. There are also two opinions about the first requirement for resolving the Punjab crisis: To remove the Central Government, or to wipe out terrorism? Some may reasonably hold that the second cannot be accomplished without the first. Barnala, the BJP and others have indicated that they consider the extremists and a section of the Akalis to be primarily guilty. There are others who believe that it is the Congress(I) which is primarily guilty. They are not moved by epithets regarding lack of patriotism flung against them by the establishment and its writers in the press. They know that Laldenga too was an outlawed traitor once. They

Deploying the Army in Punjab

[We reprint below two letters to the editor of 'The Statesman' dated 7 July 1986. Both letters should prove to be of interest to our readers.]

Sir,

The argument in the editorial, "Central Issue in Punjab" (June 29-30), boils down to the twin proposition that it is no longer necessary to adhere to the Punjab agreement and that the army deployment is becoming a political imperative. Raghukul Tilak's article, "Drastic Steps Needed" (July 1-2), also argues that not only should the accord be consigned to cold storage but also, to curb terrorism, a census of the entire population should be carried out with a view to issuing identity cards to "all male adults above the age of 12" (sic), presumably applicable to Sikhs only. Both these suggestions are fraught with dangerous possibilities.

In recent months opinion has been assiduously cultivated against the Punjab accord. It is being suggested that Mr Rajiv Gandhi was both naive and unworthy of trust when he signed the memorandum of settlement with Sant Harchand Singh Longowal barely a year ago. Any such imputation is unfair to Mr Gandhi.

The crescendo of demands for induction of the army is reminiscent of the pre-Bluestar scenario. What transpired in the grim months following May, 1984, was anything but a "spectacular success". It is strange that the editorial should suggest that the Centre may soon have to play its "last card" and that too "regardless of consequences". I hope we learn from history by analogy, if not by the maxim that a military solution is invariably worse than the disease.

True., the escalating violence must be curbed. But while screaming headlines proclaim each incident, neither the Government nor the media are bothered about the killing of the innocent by para-military forces

know that some of the demands of the so-called traitors of the Gorkha National Liberation Front have already been conceded by the Government as it hastily promises to establish new industries near Darjeeling. They know that the real struggle is for justice and more self-rule for the people, whoever they are, wherever they are.

In the final analysis, those who talk of patriotism, of unity and stability, are in fact speaking for the status quo. The Congress(I) represents that. The BJP and Barnala have supported that. They may not have realised till now what they have done. But that is exactly what they have accomplished.

There are others who want a new India, who want change. The crudest political manifestation of this urge is total opposition to the rogue Government of the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi. Always, there are two sides to a dispute. There are two sides to a polarisation. This is what the fight really is all about. The battle has barely begun. Let Barnala and BJP ponder that. ■

in so-called encounters which have been reduced to an accepted form of fiction in India. All deaths in encounters are deemed by implication, to be those of terrorists.

Implementation of the accord, even at this late stage, is the irreducible precondition for a just peace. It is unfortunate that Punjab's destiny has been

made a hostage to Haryana's politics. All the Centre's endeavours have so far been motivated by its anxiety to save the Congress(I) in Haryana and not to win over the alienated people in Punjab. Induction of the army will seriously undermine both the capacity and credibility of the Barnala Government.

Saran Singh Calcutta,

The Agony of Riot Victims

Sir,

Apropos of "Queer After Effects of November '84" by Neerja Chowdhury (June 23-24) we wish to substantiate some of her observations and also address a few questions to those in power. Continuing to work among the November '84 riot victims, we have been closely monitoring the various welfare schemes announced by the authorities. We are convinced that a large number of victims have been denied their rightful due.

Even 20 months after the carnage, about 2,500 victims continue to languish in four make-shift camps at Farsh Bazar, Nanak Piao, Hari Nagar and Tilak Vihar. Indeed shameful. Insecurity is the principal reason for the victims not returning to their earlier residence as the culprits involved in the riots (and specifically named in sworn affidavits before the Misra Commission) are still at large. No one expects the Government to punish the guilty. Culprits involved in such

acts of social violence have, seldom if ever, been punished in post-independent India. But the minimum expected to the authorities is to allot alternate accommodation to the victims in other safer parts of Delhi. Or must we force them to quit Delhi?

Regarding the much-touted scheme of allotment of slum-tenements on an exchange basis, the less said the better. Is it fair to expect a victim with property worth lakhs to exchange it for a mere 25 sq yd slum tenement? Hundreds of victims have been forced or duped to enter into this uneconomic deal. Is this not analogous to State-sponsored loot? Will this not further axe the Sikh economy? And what sort of rehabilitation is this, wherein 5000 genuine claim cases (for death/injury/damage to dwelling units) have simply been brushed aside.

— D.S. Samloke (Dr),
Gopa Joshi (Dr) and
P.S. Sahni (Dr)
New Delhi, June 26.

All that Glitters

Sir,

I am curious to know as to why the roof of Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar was covered with gold. Guru Nanak Dev and, for that matter, all the Gurus, I think, believed in humility. As such a show of gold atop the Sacred Temple does not seem to be in keeping with their professions.

A few years ago, I visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the company of a friend — a retired I.C.S. officer — a true Sikh. We did parikrama of the shrine around the large Sarovar full of sacred water — Amrit. I heard that some organisations were contemplating to cover the

roofs of some other monuments with gold. What is the sacred value of gold?

The water in the Sarovar was sacred, but it certainly was not pure. It was definitely contaminated. So I asked my friend as to why the organisations, who were willing to spend large sums of money for covering more monuments with gold, would not put up a large plant to sterilise the water of the sacred tank and purify it?

There was no answer. I hope some one knowledgeable will clarify.

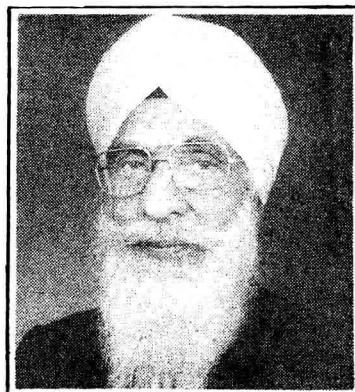
— B.L. Bhagat
C-448, Defence Colony
New Delhi.

Jolly to the Core

A few weeks ago the Chelmsford Club in New Delhi witnessed a glittering function in connection with the 86th Birthday celebration of a very likeable young man — Sardar Gurdit Singh Jolly. A nationalist to the core who spent three years as a valiant freedom fighter in the jails of the Raj, Sardar Jolly has been an educationist and social worker.

Shri I.K. Gujral, who presided over the function recalled many interesting anecdotes from his life. Gifted with humour, as he himself is, Gujral recalled that Jolly Sahib's birthday celebration had always been eventful. On his 75th birthday, Emergency was declared and on his 86th, the transfer of Chandigarh hangs as a Democle's sword before us, pregnant with many possibilities for good or ill.

A young doctor, Paramjit Kaur had a point. She thought



'Jolly' was not a surname but was suffixed to Sardar Gurdit Singh's name in acceptance of his amiable nature.

Dr. Maheep Singh was the first to make a reference to the unruffled Jolly against the rough and tumble in difficult moments.

A book — 'Gurdit Singh Jolly: A Patriot' was released on the occasion.

— Harkishan Singh

From Soldier to Forum to Politics

Jaya Jaidy, one of the Gazette's consulting editors met Gen. Aurora at his residence on Friday July 11. She recalls her association with the General since November 1984. During their meeting, Gen. Aurora talked about his decision to seek nomination to the Rajya Sabha (to which he has been elected) on an Akali Dal ticket. He also took the opportunity to draw a contrast between his forthcoming role in parliament and his position as a member of a non-party political organisation like the Sikh Forum.



During the traumatic days following the carnage of November 1984 all those who responded emotionally to the plight of the victims found themselves fighting a common battle to provide relief and rehabilitation to them. I first met Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora in the more formal forum of the Peoples' Relief Committee and subsequently in the room of the Lt. Governor of Delhi where we had separately gone to argue for more relief for the thousands of people thronging the camps. After a heated and unpleasant exchange in which the Lt. Governor questioned the credentials of the Nagrik Ekta Manch, which I was representing, General Aurora gallantly and indignantly came to our defence. Subsequently he was one of those who founded the Sikh Forum and today is a member of the Rajya Sabha on the Akali Dal.

From a soldier to a strictly non-party forum man to a representative of a political party in parliament is a phenomenon worth exploring from many points of view. So I took advantage of our friendship to engage him in conversation for the benefit of the readers of *The Forum Gazette*.

When the Sikh Forum came into being in the wake of the events of November 84, it was seen as a platform that would articulate issues on behalf of the Sikhs outside Punjab. Is this correct?

Yes it is but although the Forum was concerned with the socio-economic problems of the Sikhs outside Punjab, we also stressed solidarity with the Sikhs in Punjab without getting involved in politics. If we had started playing party politics, we would have got lost in that and forgotten the larger interests of the community, which was paramount after Blue Star and the November attacks.

Was there ever any clash between the interests of those outside Punjab and those inside who naturally were more involved with the political aspects of the problem?

There were clashes and many outside asked why they should have to suffer. But we felt that this attitude should be changed. Since Congress politics was to divide us we had to support each other and not allow ourselves to be weakened.

How far do you think the Sikh Forum has been effective in influencing decisions taken in Punjab or at the Centre?

We realize that we are a small platform but two things had to be done. One was to pro-

ject a correct image of the Sikhs and the second was to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs who had to face an adverse administration. We felt we should make common cause with those who were concerned with humane aspects rather than with any communal party. We needed them to project our problems and we got help from the PUCL, PUDR, Nagrik Ekta Manch and so on. However, we felt that the Sikh community itself should take on the responsibility of relief and rehabilitation. The Sikh Forum therefore took up the cause of those who com-

"My first love will always be the Forum and the Gazette The role I am going to play does not compel the Forum to become a part of the Akali Dal. We should not get involved in the factionalism of Punjab politics."



Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora

— elected to the Rajya Sabha on an Akali Dal ticket.

plained that they were not getting a fair deal. We took up various cases with the administration in a business-like manner. So the authorities had to take note of us.

You did also make statements on political matters.

Yes, on those which had an impact on the community. We wanted to act as a pressure group rather than a political party.

But now that you have become a member of the Akali

Dal and member of the Rajya Sabha, will there not be some confusion in the minds of many as to what role the Sikh Forum will play?

When Barnala offered me the seat I did a lot of heart searching. I had many diverse reactions from people—one group said; oh! you too have succumbed while others said 'thank god' now you can represent our views in parliament. Two points were made to me. One that the situation in Punjab was worsening and will have an impact on the Sikhs outside. As a member of parliament I would be more effective in my approach to the powers that be. The press, which is communal, would have to take note of my statements which it earlier ignored. I want to be able to project through parliament that Sikhs are proud of being both Indian and Sikh and that the Akalis are not boorish and ill-informed as they are made out to be; that they believe in the concept of nationalism and an integrated society.

How do you intend to balance this with your role in the Sikh Forum?

Dharam Singh Rawat: A Crusade For Accountability

Inder Mohan



Dharam Singh Rawat on fast at the Boat Club lawns in New Delhi.

Senior I.A.S. Officer, Dharam Singh Rawat, caused ripples in the cesspool of the U.P. Administration when he went on a hunger strike at Lucknow from May 22nd to 24th, 1986. The issue he raised was the lack of accountability of the bureaucracy to the people. Rawat maintained that this had led to the institutionalization of corruption within the administrative system. He realized this through his own experience, when he was victimized for attempting to enforce the U.P. urban Land Ceiling Act of 1977 within 12 major towns in the state, on behalf of the Directorate of Urban Land Ceiling. Some 112 crore sq. m. of land, worth Rs. 30,000 crore, (available as per statements furnished by landlords for government utilization was in the hands of usurpers due to the State's failure to acquire it. Rawat's attempts to set this right had met with insurmountable hurdles and ended in his fast at G.P.O. Park. Later he went on a similar fast in Delhi, sending shock waves throughout the country.

"The cause of accountability is an All India matter" Rawat observed. Three important civil servants, A.K. Chatterjee, K.B. Saxena and P.S. Appu had already highlighted this malaise in

the system. Their approach, however, was comparatively subdued. Rawat's direct, peaceful protest action set a unique example. It evoked a very positive public response. He also received heartening moral support from the Promoted I.A.S. Officers' Association and the Provincial Civil Service Association in U.P. In Delhi, some of his colleagues dropped in for a minute or two — understandably not wishing to be noticed by the many intelligence men constantly present. Other officials sent their wives or family members to the Boat Club, to express their good wishes and support.

People from all walks of life flocked to the Boat Club. Many Government servants felt that Rawat had taken a lead on a vital issue. Some expressed their determination to launch similar struggles in their spheres of work. The sceptical ones raised questions: "will the Government be moved to taking positive action? Do you expect a clearcut response?" To which Rawat's response was, "ultimately united action on the part of all of us will and can create a system free of social, economic and administrative evils."

It is to Rawat's credit that he

Continued on Page 15 col 4

to function as it has i.e. in the interests of the Sikhs outside Punjab. There is no clash. The value of *The Forum Gazette* is that people should feel here is a paper that fights not only for the Sikh community but for the causes of the minorities, the under-privileged and against oppression.

What about the factionalism in Punjab politics? How will you stay clear of that?

We should not get involved in that — Barnala has made no such demand. They have asked me to continue with the task of giving credibility to the Sikhs outside. Many view the Akali party as narrow because of positions taken by the local leadership at different levels, but it is not so. Everyone has their own loyalties, but I shall play an advisory role within Punjab. I do not have a vote bank there. I can only try to bring harmony between differing groups. Outside I can do propaganda and image-building and see that we do not break ourselves into different groups as they do there. I shall make every effort to show more solidarity among ourselves rather

than divisiveness.

Can you convince others of where exactly you stand?

Today the Sikhs are under pressure and the political strength of the Akali party is being broken. I felt that at this stage I would be more effective in parliament than in 84. After all I have had a good life and could have retired to bridge and golf but I became emotionally involved in this whole problem.

Do you feel now that the political process and involvement in it is a more effective way of bringing about change?

Sometimes it does not help, then you have to do it from the outside. After all many of our Sikhs were running after the Congress and giving them money. But the Congress did not bother about them during the carnage. The most prominent Sikh leaders in the Congress did not feel any more secure. With my joining the political process the Akali Dal wishes to show its empathy with the outside Sikh and create an impression at the national level rather than at the parochial level.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh : A Tribute and Assessment*

By Satindra Singh



Ranjit Singh (1778-1839) of the Sukerchakia misl established his sway over other misls and became the undisputed master

of land between the river Sutlej and a point only a few miles off Jalalabad, now in Pakistan. He had received no education and could neither read nor write. In spite of this, writes General Sir John Gordon, 'he managed better than others more learned to transact the current duties of his State by means of his retentive memory, quickness of mind, and keen observation'. In fact, he had such a sharp mind that Victor Jacquemont confesses that 'his conversation is like a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen.... The most skilful of our diplomats is a complete simpleton (in comparison with him)'.

Stories of his capacity and debauchery apart, Ranjit Singh was neither cruel nor blood-thirsty. He was perhaps the only oriental autocrat who did not take a single life for fun or fancy. He was actually known to reward his fallen foes if only to win them over to his side. In his *The Court and Camp of Ranjeet Singh*, Osborn writes: 'He rules with a rod of iron, it is true, but in justice to him it must be stated that, except in actual warfare, he had never been known to take life, and his region will be found free from any striking acts of cruelty and oppression than those of many more civilized monarchs'. Captain Leopold von Orlich believed that Ranjit Singh 'attracted faithful servants and brave warriors by means of excessive liberality'.

Secret of Success

This perhaps explains why even in that age of notoriously shifting loyalties, he was served loyally. 'It is remarkable', observes Dr Gokul Chand Narang, 'none of his officers, ministers or generals... ever played false with him'. In fact, one must count among Ranjit Singh's gifts his matchless ability to invoke allegiance from his subjects irrespective of caste and creed. There could be no other explanation as to the emergence of a powerful Sikh State in a region where the Sikhs were outnumbered by the Hindus and the Muslims in the proportion of one to ten. This achievement of Ranjit Singh is the more remarkable because until his advent on the scene, the Muslims and the non-Muslims were sworn enemies of each other.

Another achievement that should ungrudgingly belong to Ranjit Singh was his victory over the Afghans, the traditional invaders and conquerors of the Indian sub-continent. He forced them to cede the territory beyond Peshawar, Attock and the Dehrajats, which eventually formed the North-West Frontier Province of undivided India, but is now in dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Indeed, but for Ranjit Singh not only this



area but Kashmir too might have become part of Afghanistan — perhaps for ever.

But Ranjit Singh did not have the civil administration one would normally expect of a ruler with such power and authority, perhaps because he was too preoccupied with military campaigns. His financial system, too, did not conform to any strict canons of propriety. Generally, Ranjit Singh handed over newly-acquired territories to his favourite commanders and courtiers and left them free for a fixed sum to use such measures as they deemed fit to enrich themselves.

In the circumstances, there could perhaps be no trained corps of efficient civil servants who could run the day-to-day administration. Vexatious custom and excise duties were imposed on commercial classes and an exorbitant land revenue came into vogue. It was no wonder that this should have led to embezzlement, falsification of accounts and racketeering. As Lt-Col. H. Steinbach says in his book, *The Punjab*, Ranjit Singh's system of taxation 'embraced everything, every locality, every thoroughfare, every town and village, every article wherever sold, imported or exported, domestic or foreign'. This system, if one can use the term, rendered the peasantry and the middle classes too weak and the army too powerful. It was also in contradiction to Sikh stress on essential democracy.

Quicksands of Hinduism

If Ranjit Singh's reign was the pinnacle of Sikh resurgence, it also contained within itself the seeds of its disintegration and degeneration. Having no traditions of royalty, he fell back on the Hindu customs both for purposes of the court and political legitimacy. In line with the

court customs of the time, the Sikhs began to wear caste marks and follow Hindu rites at births, weddings and deaths. They began burning sacrificial fires and chanting Vedic hymns. 'Ranjit Singh's Sikhism had a strong Hindu odour; he celebrated Hindu festivals; observed Hindu rituals, his palace and his wives observed Hindu customs; he visited Hindu temples and places of pilgrimage and gave them handsome financial grants'.

When he died in 1839, four of his 16 wives and seven slave-girls performed *Sati* and Rs. 2,00,00,000 were distributed among Hindu Brahmins. On his deathbed, the Maharaja ordered that the Koh-i-Noor be sent to Jagannath temple as an offering to propitiate Hindu gods and goddesses for ensuring his recovery. Fortunately, his orders were disregarded by the Sikh Sardars. According to Khushwant Singh, the well-known Sikh historian, the religious community, which had achieved the semblance of a sovereign entity in its own right, 'began to disappear in the quicksands of Hinduism'.

Also, against Guru Gobind Singh's unequivocal edict, Ranjit Singh married two Muslim women, namely Gul Begum and Mooran. Both of them hailed from the street of ill-fame. During the Holi festival, Ranjit Singh used to roam about the streets of Lahore with Mooran by his side. He also struck a coin in her name.

Emasculation of Sarbat Khalsa

On the political plane, too, Ranjit Singh did everything possible to weaken the power of Khalsa. His professed aim, of course, was no more than 'to gratify and conciliate' it. In fairness, he did not wear a crown nor did he sit on a throne, as

was customary with persons of his eminence and authority. He also struck no coin in his own name; his currency displayed quotations from Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. But he was, in all this, guided more by political expediency and exigency than by any altruistic motives. W.L.M. Gregor in his *History of the Sikhs* writes: 'With regard to Ranjit's own religious character it is somewhat doubtful if he has any fixed system, but as the sovereign of the Sikhs who follow the religious tents of Nanak, modified by Guru Gobind Singh, it is politic on his part to support the religion, which he does in the most munificent manner'.

Ranjit Singh assiduously engineered the emasculation of the *Sarbat Khalsa* (Supreme Council of the Khalsa) and abolition of the institution of *Gurmata* (consensus) for enjoying virtually unbridled power without much responsibility to his co-religionists. He also made it a point to keep the Sikh zealots as far away from the seat of power as possible. Instead, he depended solely on the aid and advice of non-Sikh elements — the Dogras of Jammu, the Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh and the Faqir family of Muslims of Lahore — for administering the affairs of his State.

In the circumstances, it is no wonder that, while he succeeded as a ruler, Ranjit Singh failed to breathe into his people, the Sikhs, sentiments that might have emotionally held them together after he was gone. His disappearance, in fact, 'caused not a vacancy but a void' which engulfed the entire structure of the Sikh State. It was perhaps nemesis for Ranjit Singh's own essentially anti-Sikh policies and non-Sikh practices. Created by the military genius of the one man and founded in violence, treachery and blood, the Sikh

state fell soon after its guiding force was snatched away by cruel death.

Ranjit the Paradox

Paradoxically, even today Ranjit Singh's pictures and portraits adorn in Punjab the mansions of the Sikh zamindars and sardars on the one hand and poor peasants' and landless labourers' huts on the other. Four factors could possibly explain the undying Ranjit Singh legend — political, military, human and religious.

In the first place, Ranjit Singh is held to be the symbol of the last independent Indian kingdom. Secondly, besides Tipu Sultan, he was the only Indian prince who organised a comparatively modern army which later gave to the English some of the most uneasy moments of their rule in the sub-continent. Its heroic fight gave the Indian people faith in themselves and hope in their future. They saw in it the promise of a successful struggle some day against the *faranghis* on an equal footing. Thirdly, he was the only Indian who wrested some territory (until recently known as NWFP) from the Afghans, the legendary despoilers of the Indian scene. Khushwant Singh has rightly observed that Ranjit Singh was 'the first Indian ruler in a thousand years to have transcended his expansionist designs into regions of historic aggression'. And, lastly, to the Sikhs, he is the partial fulfilment of their dream as embodied in this line of their *ardas*: *Raj Karega Khalsa, agi rahe na koye* (The Khalsa shall rule its enemies shall be annihilated).

Within ten years of Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, his successors lost their kingdom to the British. But even the victors paid the highest tribute to Sikh valour and courage in battle. Lord Gough, commander of the British forces in the first Sikh war, said: 'Policy precluded me from publicly recording my sentiments on the heroism displayed not only individually but almost collectively by the Sikh Sardars and the army; and I declare, were it not for a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I would have wept to have witnessed the slaughter of so devoted a body of men'. A British subaltern wrote: 'The Sikhs fought like devils... fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle. Such a mass of men I never set eye on and as plucky as lions; they ran right on the bayonets of the 24th (Regiment) and struck off their assailants when they were transfixed'. According to William Edwards, who had followed the governor-general in the very thick of the Anglo-Sikh wars, the Sikhs were 'the bravest and best disciplined enemy we had encountered'. He also admitted that 'never was an empire in greater peril at any previous period than this time'. Referring to the two Anglo-Sikh wars, General Sir Henry Have-lock observed: 'Another such action will shake the Empire'. ■

* From the author's forthcoming book, *The Sikhs: Crisis of Identity*.

Confusion Confounded — and Compounded

Kamla Bhasin

"May I come in sir?"
I look at the person
wanting to come in.
Yes, he can see. His eyes don't
look heavy with blindness.

I look at myself. Do I look so
masculine that he cannot make
out my sex? In spite of my
'manly' demeanour and man-
nerisms, which are not really
manly, but signs of a working
woman, I find I look feminine

red to as 'Madam Chairman'!
(What is she now? A man, a
woman, both or none?) That is
why Mrs. Indira Gandhi was
called "The only man in the
cabinet; the She-King of India!"

Their Confusion ... and Mine

Confusion, confusion ... con-
fusion ... Their confusion is so

letters could be of the same
gender as themselves.

That is why well known
women artists have to have
'One-Man' shows! Sometimes
when my husband comes along
with me for one of my meetings,
I find that the person (a male) I
have gone to meet looks only at
him while talking to me. Sud-
denly so shy and respectful!
How considerate men are!

Poor Confused Souls

The reason for addressing a
clear-cut woman as 'Sir' could
also be that the poor souls are
confused. When they come to an
office without the least suspi-
cion of finding a woman in the
seat, they don't know how to
behave when confronted by
such an unprecedented, odd
and unnatural situation! They
extend their hand, then take it
back. Shaking hands with a
woman? No! No! 'Namastey' will
surely do or just a smile. While
talking to me, they don't know
where to look. Sometimes, it is
towards the window, sometimes
their feet. Men tend to look at us
women only from some slinking
side angle, usually lecherously
and with a sense of guilt. Straight
looks and straight conver-
sation, it seems, are strictly
for men and between men only.

If they are not aware of my
marital status, the poor fellows
are all the more confused. "Now
is this woman a Miss or Mrs.?"
Had I been a man things would
not have been so difficult; a Mr.
everyone knows is a Mr, whether
married, bachelor or divorced.
The use of Ms for women
should reduce the confusion,
but one wonders if there is
enough common sense around
for such an unthinkable innova-
tion to be accepted with equa-
nimity. Clarity for us women is
confusion for the poor male! ■

enough. Men usually don't pass
me off as a sexless apology of a
female. Then why on earth
can't this man and so many
others who come to my office
say, "May I come in madam?"
Perhaps it is his inadequate Eng-
lish ... I wait for him to speak a
few sentences. No-no—his Eng-
lish is not so bad really. Then
what the hell is it?

Is it that he is not used to
seeing women in offices, at least
not in executive positions? In-
spite of our former woman
Prime Minister, all the profuse
statistics which are trotted out
about women being in this and
that job, in politics, in the admi-
nistrative and foreign service,
etc., and all the eloquent pronoun-
cements about women's
equality in our country, at least
this poor man has still not seen
too many women whose per-
mission has to be sought to
enter their offices. For him it is
natural that the deity in the
office must always be a male.
Now, when he does see a
woman, why can't he call a
woman a woman? It is probably
very difficult for him to call a
woman in a position of power, a
woman. That is why women
presiding at meetings are refer-

compounded that it confuses
me. The other day there was this
(informally worded) invitation
from a very well known cultural
organisation. It read: "Come to
our variety show with wife and
children." I didn't quite know
how to comply with their re-
quest! The invitation was ob-
viously meant for Married Men
only! But it had been sent to the
women principals of the wo-
men's colleges, to the inspec-
tress of schools, and other
women in authority. Would an
Indian husband, or for that mat-
ter any husband, like to accom-
pany his wife to a show with an
invitation in which 'wife' and
children' was replaced by 'hus-
band and children'? He would
rather be dead than allow him-
self to be so insulted.

Then of course there are the
formal invitations addressed to
me stating "Dress-Longue suit."
If I was to take such an invita-
tion literally by word, my very
passport of femininity would be
lost to me and of course to those
who find me exciting only for
my sex. Worst of all is the case
when women themselves send
out invitations, appeals, circular
letters, etc., beginning with 'Dear
Sir' only. Even these Madams
forget that the recipients of their

An "Encounter" with the Sikhs

Brijender S. Panwar

The author, a Hindu from Western Uttar Pradesh,
had a refreshingly different and endearing expe-
rience with the rural Sikhs of Punjab during Oper-
ation Blue Star. He recounts his unforgettable
"encounter" with the magnanimity of these simple
people.

The dawn of Saturday, June
9, 1984 had an adventure
in store for me. It was,
undoubtedly, a day of my trial. I
set out for a journey which
generated a dynamic sense of
self-confidence and determina-
tion within my heart and soul. I
was trapped in Patiala when the
army operation 'Blue Star' was
on at the Golden Temple and curfew
was clamped in all the
cities of Punjab. There was strict
censorship on the press, and
newspapers were not available.
Radio broadcasting and televi-
sion news were the media
through which we kept abreast
of the latest happenings. I had
to appear for my I.A.S. examina-
tion in Delhi on 10th June and
there was no news of the exams
being postponed.

On 8th June, I contacted the
authorities and requested them
to help me by arranging an army
escort party for Delhi but they
expressed their helplessness in
doing so I explored the possibi-
lity of walking 40 kms and reach-
ing the Punjab-Haryana border
at a place called Nanyola from
where I could get a bus for
Ambala. Finally, before going to
bed, I decided to take the risk of
walking through the villages of
Patiala district and reaching
Ambala.

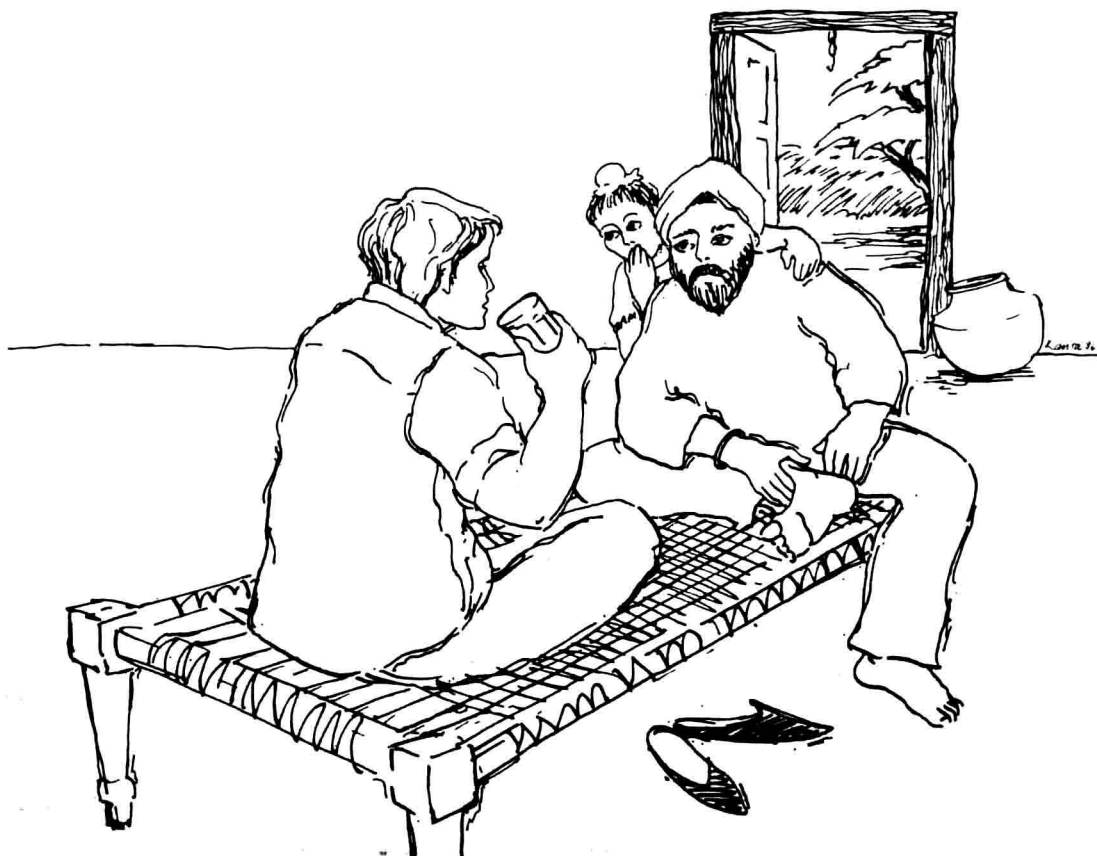
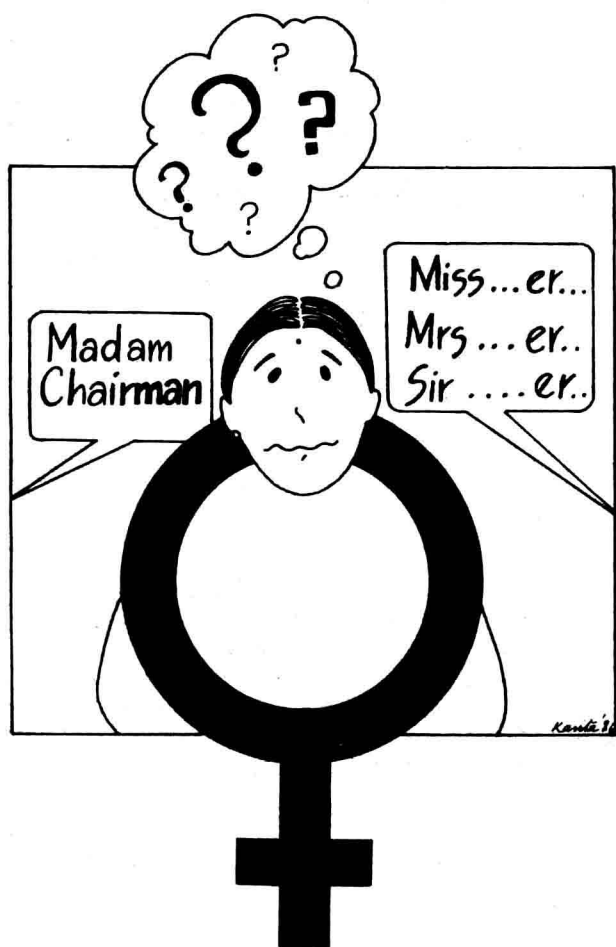
At about 5-00 a.m. on 9th
June, I left the N.I.S. Campus
(Patiala) where I was undergoing
a coaching camp. Even the out-
skirts of Patiala city had a
deserted look. There was no sign
of human existence and it
looked like a ghost land. I
passed by the haunted houses, a
sense of terror and uncertainty
overcoming me. A vague map of
the area was my sole compan-

ion, but at one stage, I lost all
sense of direction and stood in
panic gazing at the piece of
paper exhibiting the guide map.
My heart sank within me when I
felt the presence of the first liv-
ing being, a Sikh farmer carrying
a spade on his shoulder, who
was apparently going to his
fields. I wished him 'Sat Sri Akal',
and requested him to guide me.
It was as if God had sent an
angel for my help. In this hour
of crisis, he accompanied me to
a 'nallah' which was at the far
end of Patiala and explained the
lanes and by-lanes I had to fol-
low in order to reach Nanyola.
Taking note of his advice, I bade
him good-bye and set out for my
destination. I walked through 8
kms of thick jungle and reached
the first village. Farmers were
busy in their daily routine. I was
received with the usual warmth
and hospitality by the rural
folk and was offered 'lassi' when
I asked for water. The people,
old as well as young, were cur-
ious to know what was happen-
ing in Patiala. Making proper use
of my broken Punjabi, I took
genuine pains to explain every-
thing in brief and they were sat-
isfied with my explanations.

Contrasting Worlds

I continued my journey,
comparing and contrasting both
the worlds: Patiala (which was at
a distance of only a few kilome-
ters) and the small villages
which I had left behind. Patiala
so tense and frightening, whe-
reas the villages so normal, calm
and soothing. I saw the Jat Sikhs
working in their fields. There
was no sign of hostility or con-
frontation anywhere. The sun

Continued on page 13, col. 1



Encounter ...

Continued from page 12

had risen pretty high by the time I reached Fategarh, one of the most prosperous villages on the route. I was sympathetically guided to the next village. I was treated with the same warmth and kindness in every village, inhabited by the majestic and strongly built Jat Sikhs. In certain villages, young men accompanied me to the end of their village, showing me the way. I stopped to drink water and at the same time had a chat with the curious and simple villagers. Before reaching Hadyan, the last village of Punjab (Nanyola, the first semi-town of Haryana was only 1 kilometer away) I had crossed 20 Jat Sikh villages and covered a distance of more than 40 kilometers. It was 1.30 p.m.: It was very hot and I was completely soaked in sweat and dust.

I approached a Sikh youth and asked for a glass of water. Mr. Harvinder Singh, who is a student of M.A. (Economics) at Punjabi University, Patiala, took me home and forced me to take lunch. After staying with the family for an hour, I felt at home and even today I feel grateful for their selfless affection for a stranger like me. I took leave of them and reached Nanyola from where I took a bus for Ambala. I reached Delhi at 8.30 p.m. None of my friends could believe their eyes when they found me in their midst.

Apology to Sikhs

Thus, at last, I reached Delhi and appeared for my I.A.S. exam the next day, i.e. on 10th June. I find no words to express the thrill, determination and self-confidence which I derived out of this adventure. The glamour of the I.A.S. faded to the background and a strong desire to be of some use to the rural Sikh masses crept up within me. I was surprised to witness the total contradiction of what the press reported on Punjab. Patiala district was one of the most disturbed areas and one could safely guess the real state of things in the rural areas after hearing of my experience. On behalf of many others who share my admiration for the Sikhs, I wish to offer my apologies to every member of this community for the wrongs the country has done unto them.

Like in other Indian states, a majority of the Punjab population resides in villages and the rural people are the real preservers of culture and traditions. They live so close to nature that it is not easy to divide them on the basis of castes. The rural masses have been living in complete harmony and will continue to do so in spite of all odds against them.

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An Indian Way of Dying



One morning in November last year, I drove my mother's dead body in a family cortege to the electric crematorium by the Jamuna.

Our departure for the last rites was delayed. In spite of prior arrangement, the municipal hearse did not show up. Perhaps a punctured tyre or a driver who had overslept had held it up; whatever the reason, my mother's last journey was not able to keep its appointed hour. As appropriate an occasion as any to thank the civic authorities for their kind consideration in trying to give the departed lady's body a few extra hours before final extinction.

We coasted along the Ring Road, dipping in salute to the sylvan samadhis of our departed leaders lined along the river's bank. What a nation we are; how we do our leader's proud! A nation capable of transforming malarial marshes into green belts overnight.

A nation, a people who can worship non-violence and Gandhi in the same breath as they can the arrogance of today's politicians. Those who swear by ahimsa or the brutal pursuit of power, we accord them the same awe and respect as we did the White Man's Raj until nineteen forty seven. Here they were, our great leaders, laid to rest along the river of blood that was the Jamuna only a year ago.

In spite of the civic authorities breach of promise to enable my mother to keep her appointment with her ashes, we arrived

at the crematorium on time. This municipal institution is a little up the river bank from Shakti Sthal, the well manicured site where Indira Gandhi is enshrined in a garden. The caretakers of this civic facility were there alright, even though they were unwashed, unshaven and reeking with overnight odours. Moreover thanks to the Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking, there was no electricity with which to light the furnace. It could take five minutes or half an hour for the supply to be restored. In the meantime, the mourners who had gathered for the occasion, had to maintain a solemn and patient front for an extended period of time. As could be expected, there was not much in the environment of the crematorium from which to draw solace or consolation. There was however enough fuel to ignite a few sparks of disgust and contempt for the guardians of our city. There was a feeble attempt at a garden, cobwebs and bird-droppings all over the building, fans black with soot and jammed with rust, and stagnant drains.

Fortunately, we had broken with tradition by arranging for a jatha of kirtan-singers to accompany the family entourage for my mother's last rites in this soulless cremation factory. With the electricity out of action, with dust and dirt in full rein, we at least had hymns from the Gurbani to render the place with a semblance of beauty and dignity.

For this saving grace it was difficult to feel thankful towards our city fathers, except for their indulgence in not banning religious music from within the portals of a building owned by a secular socialist state! Having taken its time off, the electricity came on; the furnace was readied for converting my mother's body into ashes ... and it was all over in a matter of seconds. All over except for thoughts of a life that began with the Durbar of 1911 and ended one year after

the massacre of innocents in November 1984. All over except for tears mixed with anger at how even the rich must die in their own habitat. If such be the plight of the affluent, then what of the poor?

Death too is a matter of culture. It's rituals, like that of childbirth, puberty and marriage, are also a part of our heritage. And everyone knows how proud we are of our culture! So proud that we have converted it into a heavily subsidised export commodity. Our mandarins along with their god-mothers and fathers, who manage and patronise culture have developed the expertise to export full-scale cultural festivals to the world's great cities, complete with bacteria-free golgappas, pasteurised mithai, adivasi folk dancers and bronzes from the most hallowed inner sanctums of old temples. But in our own land we have to be reconciled to a culture which only provides filth and civic apathy as companions on the way to ashes. What a nation we are; one which can transport a priceless montage of our heritage across the seven seas, but cannot maintain a decent crematorium even along the stretch of pampered samadhis of our great leaders.

As I drove back home after the ceremony was over, I was also ridden with hallucinations of our medical and health care systems. The combine of medicines, doctors and pharmaceutical companies, turned my mother into a hypochondriac. She was one of those who could not resist trying out all the brands of the same drug. She could not resist vitamin tablets, tonics and laxatives, which bore little relation to her health problems. She also found it difficult to resist consulting doctors, vaidas and hakims whose diagnosis and treatment amounted to hardly anything more than the accompanying literature with a bottle of medicine.

Of course we all come and go from this world; everyone must

die ... but my mother did not die a natural death. She was killed by the alliance between our politicians, bureaucrats, medical establishment and the national and multinational drug syndicates. And as we the family now prepare to immerse her ashes in one of Punjab's rivers, we wonder if the Attorney General would help us prosecute the State and civic authorities for first allowing my mother to be poisoned by dangerous medicines and then subjecting her to an undignified way of dying?

There is little doubt that as we take the Grand Trunk Road to the waters of the Sutlej, we will think of the past five years of death and destruction all around us; Nellie in Assam, death by State and fundamentalist terrorism in Punjab, death by deadly medicines, death via industrial development through the kindness of Union Carbide in Bhopal and Shriram Chemicals in Delhi. Must death be morbid, I wonder, or should it carry us with caring and compassion into the time and space of history?

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The Fate of Secularism - II

Ashis Nandy

Why is the old ideology of secularism not working in India? There are many reasons for this; I shall mention only a few.

First, in the early years of Independence, we could somehow screen people entering the public life, specially the upper levels of the public services. Thanks to the growth of democratic participation in politics — India has gone through eight general elections and innumerable local and state elections — such screening is no longer possible. We can no longer make sure that those who reach the highest levels of police, bureaucracy or politics believe in old-style secularism.

To give one example, two ministers of the present central cabinet and a number of high-ups in the ruling party have been accused of not only encouraging, organising and running a communal riot, but also of protecting the guilty and publicly threatening civil rights workers engaged in relief. This would have been unthinkable only ten years ago. It has become thinkable today because our ultra-elites can no longer informally



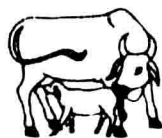
screen decision-makers the way they once used to, for our political participation is growing explosively.

Second, it has become more and more obvious to a larger number of people that modernity is now no longer the ideology of a small minority; it now rules the world. The idea that religions dominate India and that there are a few modern Indians fighting that domination is no longer convincing. We now know that it is modernity which rules the world and, even in this subcontinent, the religions have now been cornered. Much of the fanaticism and violence associated with religions come today from the sense of defeat in the believers, from their feelings of impotency, anger and self-hatred while facing a world which is mostly secular and nonbelieving.

This issue has another side. When we say to a Muslim or a Sikh 'be secular' or 'let's have secular politics', we are in effect telling him or her 'you better go slow only you! Islam or Sikhism, so that you can be a truer Indian and as a consolation prize we promise we will force the majority community also to shed their Hinduism'. In other words, we are indirectly telling the person, 'you give up your faith in public; we also will give up our faiths in public and together we will be able to live in freedom from religious intolerance'. I need hardly add that, however, reasonable the solution may look to people like us, it is not an adequate consolation to the faithful, to whom religion is religion precisely because it provides an over-all theory of life, including public life, and because life is not worth living without the theory.

Third, we have begun to find out that, while appealing to the believers to keep the public sphere free of religion, we have no means of ensuring that the ideologies of secularism and modernity themselves do not begin to act as faiths. That is, while we are telling everyone to give up his or her faith in public, we offer no guarantee that can protect the citizen from the sufferings inflicted by the state in the name of its ideology. In fact the ideology itself is becoming more and more oppressive. With the help of modern communications and the coercive power at its command, the state can use this ideology to silence the citizen, particularly if the citizen happens to be a dissenter. The role of secularism today is no different from the role of many religious ideologies in the past. In fact, the citizen has less protection against the ideology of the state today than he has against the religious ideologies.

This can be put another way. To many Indians today, secularism comes as a part of a larger package. This package often plays the same role vis-a-vis the peripheries of this society —



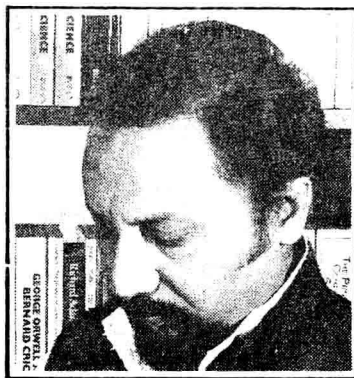
sanctioning or justifying violence against the weak, the poor and the dissenting — that the church, the *ulema* or the *mahants* justified in earlier times.

Finally, it has become obvious that the belief that the values derived from the secular ideology of the state will be a better guide to political action and to a more tolerant and richer political life as compared to the values derived from the religious faiths, have become even more unacceptable to large parts of Indian society than it was a decade ago. We are living in times when it has become clear that the Indian state may have something to learn from Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism, but Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism have very little to learn from the state. And the hope that the Indian state would give a set of values to guide a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh in his daily public behaviour lies splintered around us. The ideology of the Indian state and, for that matter, the deification of the state may be all right with people like you and me, but they fall flat on large numbers of decent Indians.

Three Responses

Thus, we are at a point of time when old-style secularism can no longer guide moral or political action. All that the ideology of secularism can do now is to sanction the absurd search for a modern language of politics in a traditional society which has an open polity. Let me spell this out.

In most post-colonial societies, when we discuss religion, politics or religion-and-politics, we have an invisible reference point. This reference point is the Western Man. Not the real Western but the Western Man as we



in the defeated civilisations visualise him. This Western Man rules the world, it seems to us, because of his superior understanding of the relationship between faith and politics. To cope with this success, every major religion has produced three responses — I should say two responses and one non-response.

The first response — it is not easy to find a word which will capture the spirit of the response, but I shall try — is to model oneself on the Western Man. I do not want to use the word 'imitation' because something more than that is involved. The response consists in somehow capturing, within one's own self and one's own culture, the traits one sees as the reasons of West's success on the world stage. It looks a liberal approach and those responding in this way justify it as a universal response. Modern India and we who belong to it specialise in this response.

The second response to the Western Man is that of the zealot. The zealot thinks that we must somehow defeat the Western Man at his own game, the way for example Japan has done in economic matters. This is a very crude way of describing the response but I am trying to convey some flavour of a strategy which is becoming popular in India. The heart of the response is the faith that what Japan has done in economy, we can do in the case of religion and politics.

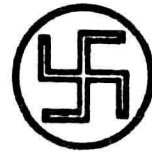


We can, for example, decontaminate Hinduism of its folk elements, turn it into a purely Vedantic faith, and then give it additional teeth with the help of Western technology, so that Hinduism can ultimately defeat all its enemies and equal the Western Man. The zealot judges the success or failure of his own religion by this one criterion.

A colleague once gave me the example of a book on the Manusmriti written by one of the Shankaracharyas. The book not merely pathetically justified the Manusmriti by saying that it

provided the basis of the constitutions of many advanced western countries, as if that made text more sacred. The title page of the book said—remember, it was a commentary on a sacred book of law written by one of the most respected authorities on Hindu traditions — that its author was B.A., LL.B. If a guru of the world, a *jagadguru*, has to justify his commentary on an Indian sacred text by referring to his second-rate western degrees, then of course we know where we are and what is the state of our cultural self-confidence. No wonder, we see every other day full-page advertisements by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the newspapers, trying to suggest that Vedanta is true because quantum physics says so.

Such responses are characteristics of a zealot as well as the ultimate admissions of defeat. Japan in a sense has admitted this defeat by deciding to model itself on the West. Once it had other options, but it chose to ignore them and tried to defeat the West at its own game. I am not concerned here with Japan's success or failure as an imitation West; I am concerned



with the zealot and with the so-called revivalist movements modelled on the zealot's concept of religion.

Take Hindu revivalism. Actually, whatever the revivalist Hindu revives, it is not Hinduism. The pathetically comic, martial uniform of khaki half-pants which the RSS cadres have to wear tell it all. Unconsciously modelled on the uniforms of the colonial police, the khaki shorts are the final proof that the RSS is an illegitimate child of western colonialism.

Likewise, there is nothing fundamentally Islamic about the fundamentalist Muslims. They are the ones who are usually the first to sell their souls at a discount to the forces which seek to disenfranchise the ordinary Muslims on the pretext that the latter do not know their Islam well. And we are today witnessing the same process within Sikhism, too.

There is however, the third response, unsung and unheralded. It comes from the nonmodern majority of this society, though to the middleclass intellectuals it looks a marginal response. This response does not keep religion separate from politics, but it does say that the traditional ways of life have, over the centuries, developed their own principles of tolerance and these principles must have a play in Indian politics. The response affirms that religious communities in India have known how to live with each other. It is not modern India which has tolerated Judaism in India for nearly two thousand years, Christianity from before the time it went to Europe, and Zoroastrianism for more than a thousand years; it is traditional India

which has shown such tolerance. That is why today, as India is getting modernised, communal violence is increasing. In the earlier centuries riots were rare and localised; even after Independence we used to have one communal incident a week; now we have more than one incident a day. And more than ninety per cent of these riots begin in urban India, and within urban India, in and around the new industrial townships.

The Alternative

To me it seems pretty obvious that it is on non-modern India, on its traditions and principles of tolerance, that we shall have to build a new our political culture. This is less difficult than it at first seems. Let us not forget that the great symbols of religious tolerance in India over the last 2500 years have not been modern, though we the moderns have hijacked these symbols.

When we say that emperor Ashoka was secular, we forget that Ashoka was not a secular ruler; he was a practising Buddhist in his statecraft. He based his tolerance on Buddhism, not on secularism. When we say that



Akbar was secular, we forget that he derived his tolerance not from secularism but from Islam. He believed that he had to be tolerant because that was the message of true Islam. And in our times Gandhi derived his religious tolerance from Hinduism, not from secular statecraft.

Modern India has a lot to answer for. So have our intellectuals. We have failed to be respectful to the traditions of non-modern, nonsecular tolerance in our society.

I stress this point because we are now faced with a form of communal violence which is paradoxically quite secular. The anti-Sikh riots which took place in Delhi in November 1984 were associated not so much with religious hatred as with political cost-calculations and economic greed. The same logic operated in the case of the riots in Bhimwadi, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

Zealotry has produced many riots, but secular politics, too, has now begun to produce its own version of riots. As for the victims of a riot, the fact that the riot might have been organised and led by persons motivated by political cost-calculations and not by religious fanaticism can hardly be a solace.

The moral of the story of is: the time has come for us to build on the faith of the ordinary people and hope that the Indian state may learn something about religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism rather than wish that the ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs will one day learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of statecraft. ■

Concluded.

The Accord and the ...

Continued from page. 1

will have five Congress ministers to the MNF's four, and that this interim government will be in power for six months until elections are held, the present Chief Minister, Mr Lalthanwala, is reluctant to join the interim Cabinet and has kept his decision pending.

The Congress(I) won the last Mizoram elections on the basis of its support for a political settlement with the MNF. But unlike the Mizo Union which ultimately merged with the Congress, Laldenga has made it clear that he is neither joining or merging with the Congress. For him the 6 months of coalition are a 'testing time'. Once the former insurgent party has established itself overground, what will be its equation with the Congress(I)? Lalthanwala has been forced to step down from

the Chief Ministership for the sake of the agreement but he has declared that he wants to streamline the Congress (I) in preparation for the next election and therefore would prefer to keep out of the interim set-up. As things stand now it looks as if there will be a bitter election fight between the coalition parties.

Greater Mizoram

The issue of greater Mizoram will be a major one in Mizo politics. The parties opposed to the Congress(I) have demanded a Greater Mizoram i.e. the merger of all Mizo inhabited areas in neighbouring states. As Laldenga told *The Forum Gazette* he has not given up the demand for Greater Mizoram but only "put it aside" for the purpose of the Memorandum of Settlement. However, as soon as he arrived in Mizoram he said in his press conference "We Mizos have a

dream of a unified Great Mizoram with the Mizo majority areas in parts of Assam, Tripura and Manipur added to Mizoram". He went on to urge Mizos living outside Mizoram to come out and shout for a greater Mizoram, adding that the conferring of statehood on Mizoram will not solve the problems of Mizos living outside. The MNF chief's remarks will cause consternation in the neighbouring states and provoke some concern in New Delhi. It appears that for some years now Mizos have been quietly settling in considerable numbers in the reserved forest areas of Assam, a Cachar district which borders Mizoram. When the local administration became aware of this encroachment it attempted to evict the Mizos but met with stiff local resistance, and with no response to its communications to Aizwal. These areas are now being demanded as "Mizo inhabited areas". In the north-eastern states Mizos are credited with greater shrewdness, and because of the high literacy rate they enjoy, with far more business acumen, etc. than the other tribal people, there is already a certain nervousness about their taking over from the less sophisticated locals wherever they go.

Immediately the agreement with the MNF became known, alarm bells were sounded that in the past agreements between the Government of India and Laldenga had been aborted at the last moment, that Laldenga might slip out of the agreement even now. But he had made a statement that "the MNF has irrevocably committed itself to joining the mainstream of Indian polity in total adherence to the Constitution of India and to a strong, united India." The Mizo leader and the Government of India both seem to have realized that neither can win on their own terms. The MNF, tough and determined as it may have been, cannot defeat the Indian army, and the Government of India has realized, belatedly, that it can temporarily subdue the insurgents by force, but it cannot win by force the goodwill that peace demands. **Equally belatedly the Government has recognised that certain traditions and customs must be respected and preserved for the honour and dignity of a people, and that peace can be ensured only by sharing of power in a democratic polity.**

Laldenga's Ambition

But will Laldenga be able to restrain his ambition, make the transition from insurgency to parliamentary opposition if necessary? His Aizwal press conference reveals that his ambition is to emerge as a leader of the north-eastern states. He has lost no time in calling for the reorganisation of the North-eastern States to allow for what he calls "better administration and to tackle the insurgency problem". He has always been a practical man through out the 20 years of underground operations; if he is bringing up Greater Mizoram and northeastern politics at this moment he must have a purpose in doing so. Will the Memorandum of Settlement run into problems at an early date? Has peace really come to Mizoram? ■

Barnala Denies ...

Continued from page. 1

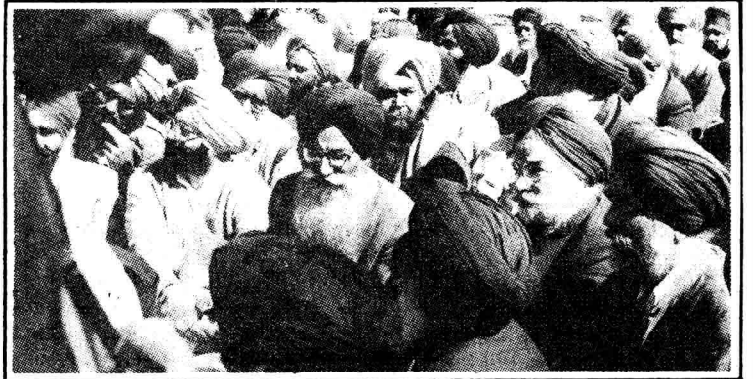
during Operation Bluestar and Woodrose. They had been motivated there to kill and to raise Khalistan slogans. Such people became trigger happy and started indulging in senseless killings. He cited the case of Billa who had the blood of 110 persons on his hands.

"But in the affected areas, we have managed to effectively deal with almost 30-40 per cent of

for the boys in Jodhpur. Tohra is a member of the Rajya Sabha, but he has done nothing as an M.P. to help secure their release." "Tohra", Mr. Barnala said, "was actually involved in the same case as the detenus in Jodhpur, but somehow got himself released." The President of the Akali Dal hoped that where Tohra had failed, Gen. Aurora would succeed as an M.P.

Parallel With Mizoram

The Punjab Chief Minister



The three Bs of Punjab: Barnala, Balwant and Badal — with Amarinder on Barnala's right.

the hard-core element. They have either been killed, arrested or are on the run," claimed Mr. Barnala.

Regrets Concerning Tohra

When the Gazette asked him why the Akali M.P.s had not cared to raise the issues of the Jodhpur detenus and the November carnage in parliament, the Chief Minister replied that both the matters had been taken up. He, however, did not appear to be too sure about it. But Sardar Barnala was strident in his criticism of Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who he said "had done nothing

welcomed the Mizoram accord, but asked if it offered any lessons for his state, he pointed out that the two situations were not similar. In Punjab there were two major communities, whose demands did not always coincide. The Punjab problem, he felt, was more concerned with religious fundamentalism, reactions to Bluestar and excesses committed on the youth by the army and para-military forces than with secession as such. **But he hoped that if a general amnesty was offered in Mizoram, the same would be extended to Punjab.** ■

Terms of Settlement

The Memorandum of Settlement between the Mizo National Front and the Government of India raises certain intriguing questions. In many ways it is unique because it was preceded by an agreement between the Congress(I) and the MNF. Obviously the acceptance by the MNF of the terms of the Memorandum depended on the Centre's acceptance of the MNF stepping directly from insurgency into a ruling coalition. Normally political arrangements should follow an agreement with the Central government. But Mr Laldenga's insurgency has always had its unique features. It is equally interesting that the elected Congress(I) has 'voluntarily' given way to yesterday's insurgents in the formation of the Interim Cabinet, as if it is taken for granted that the MNF leader is entitled to the Chief Ministership. Mr Laldenga has said that unless the MNF was in the government he could not ask his men to come overground and 'turn in' their arms. But he could have taken the Deputy Chief Ministership if the Centre had thought he would accept.

Mizoram and Punjab

In the present context of the Punjab imbroglio the settlement with the MNF may have certain repercussions. Even before the agreement, the All India Sikh Students' Federation had asked why, if the Centre can negotiate with the Nagas and Mizos, both of whom have fought openly for secession for years and have declared they are not Indians, it cannot hold talks with the AISSF which has always denied any secessionist aims? Does the geographically strategic situation of Punjab dictate a different approach? Or is the electoral arithmetic the decisive factor? When an agreement has actually been signed with the man who was responsible for hoisting the Mizo flag in Aizwal more questions will be asked.

The amnesty terms laid down in the Memorandum have

also led people to ask why, if Mizo insurgents sentenced for murder and other heinous crimes can be pardoned, if the offence was committed 'in connection with or during the duration of the disturbed conditions' — Mr Laldenga never uses the word 'insurgency', only 'disturbed conditions' — cannot the Jodhpur detenus, many of whom are innocent of any offence at all, at least be put on trial, and, if found innocent, released after more than two years of detention under draconian legislation? Why, in any case, should those convicted of murder, be granted amnesty, regardless of circumstances? Now with Laldenga bringing up the point of a general amnesty for members of the MNF and MNA still underground, the AISSF boys' case is further strengthened in many people's eyes.

The MNF has received extremely favourable terms under the Memorandum and this inevitably raises the question "Does this mean that if an insurgency can be sustained for a long enough period, if it can continue to be of nuisance value even when the numbers are small, will insurgents be able to force favourable terms in a settlement? The Government of Tripura is already allegedly concerned about the impact of the agreement on the Tripura National Volunteers leader, Bejoy Hrangkhawl. He may be encouraged to intensify his activities in the hope that he can ultimately win favourable terms. Undoubtedly Naga insurgents led by Muiva will get a boost as perhaps will the PLA in Manipur and the newly emerging movement by the Gurkhas in West Bengal. Sikh extremists too may read the signs the same way.

The agreement has provoked an expected reaction from the BJP which has accused the government into entering an agreement which is, according to them "unconstitutional". The reference is undoubtedly to Article 371 and its "fairly" which are anathema to the BJP. ■

H.M.

Rawat ...

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did not once bring up the issue of his own service. When suspension orders were served on him on June 17th, his smiling self-confidence remained. Before coming to Delhi, he had applied for a month's earned leave. His opponents deliberately converted it to medical leave. He was then suspended for "misusing his medical leave" and for not reporting for duty.

Meanwhile, P. Chidambaram, Union Minister for State for Personnel and Administrative Reforms, asked to meet Rawat on June 23rd. (The minister had taken a long time to acknowledge Rawat's letter of Jan. 25th 1986, seeking an appointment that was never confirmed.) This time, Chidambaram saw him for an hour. One outcome was that the minister announced on the same day that I.A.S. officer could now write their own confidential reports. He asserted that from now on Confidential Reports would become a tool for human resource development, rather than a control mechanism.

Rawat reached Lucknow on

June 25th. The following day he was served with a charge-sheet. he has been charged with having resorted to a hunger strike first in Lucknow and then in Delhi and for not joining his new post on the Board of Revenue, in violation of the Government Servants Conduct Rules. he has also been charged with bringing disrepute to the Government by his hunger strikes.

Rawat's reaction to the charge sheets has been on expected lines. He will send a formal reply soon. Instead of taking up cudgels with the Government on the issue of his service, he has instead planned his action to concentrate on the basic issue of lack of accountability to the public. He is likely to undertake another fortnight's hunger strike in Lucknow for this.

Rawat has made a purposeful beginning. This type of peaceful struggle is bound to have a multi-dimensional character with all its ramifications. The fundamental issue he has raised concerns us all, and therefore Rawat and his struggle needs the support of everyone. ■

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Missing the Point in the Water Dispute

Haryana and Punjab's Short-Sighted Approach

Bharat Dogra

Ever since the sharing of irrigation waters between Punjab and Haryana became a major part of the dispute between the two states, the realities involved have receded into the background and political expediency has taken centre stage. Audiences have been mobilized to match highly polished performances by disruptive forces on both sides so that a project like the Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal has more disagreements surrounding it than it has credibility.

Completely neglected in this confusion, are the major irrigation-related problems of both Haryana and Punjab, problems common to the other states as well. Unless these are taken into account it is likely that politicians will find themselves fighting over arid acres before long.

The Green Revolution in Retrospect

The reason of course is that the "Green Revolution" and the attendant race for agricultural progress in both states resulted in long term problems which have been ignored. The problems are now upon us and the fact is that the water table has fallen in 50% of the Punjab already. According to the Irrigation and Power Commissioner, S.S. Boparai, "As many as 60 out

of the state's 118 blocks are black areas where no tubewells can be allowed." In 'grey' areas, 22 blocks are fast turning 'black'. In some areas the water table went down by 10 meters between 1975-1984. Similarly in Haryana, hydrological reports have advised the government to stop any further exploitation of ground water, even if it means resorting to dryland farming. The agro-irrigation plan of the state government has been upset by this warning, especially since the 7th plan was expected to be 3.98 lakh ham and has now been found to be around 2 lakh ham.



The high yielding varieties that were introduced in the "Green Revolution" require much more water than the traditional varieties they replaced. In Haryana and Punjab, which constitute the heart of the "Green Revolution" in the country, most of the agricultural land has been given even to high yielding varieties after replacing coarse cereals which used less water and absorbed less chemical fertilizers as well. The requirement for water in both states increased

rapidly and according to the Planning Commission 86% of the total irrigation potential of the Punjab has already been exploited. Haryana is close behind with 74%. These two states also lead the country in the percentages of net irrigated areas to net cultivated areas.

Soil and Water Management

Since poor soil and water management practices and prolonged use of poor quality irrigation water are the cause, as stated by an authority no less than the Dept. of soils, Punjab Agricultural University, it follows that these are the problem rather than more water. When we note that despite drawing on massive quantities of water and using increasing quantities of agrochemicals both states face stagnant, near stagnant or even diminishing yields of several crops in several areas, it becomes obvious that a comprehensive look at the agricultural practices of the last two decades is

needed urgently. Pressure groups of both states are busy grabbing as much water as they can from each other all the while brainwashing farmers into believing that political regional interests and agricultural interests are the same issue. Meanwhile the irrigational and agricultural future of both states ceases to exist as a viable proposition. Two decades ago there was a massive stock of water which has by now been used up indiscriminately. Not much that was positive was achieved in the process, certainly not the prosperity of the smaller farmer nor the conservation of his major resource, the land, which has in fact, been degraded.

Instead of depicting farmers as having a hard time because agriculture is not intensive enough or that the potential for cash crops has not been realized, all because of not enough water, a new set of priorities must be put forward. After all what guarantee do we have that more water will be put to proper use if the massive amount used up in the last twenty years has brought no significant benefits

to the majority of peasants?

Some Alternatives

It is time now for democratic forces to explain to the farmers of Haryana and Punjab that a better future for them lies not in grabbing each other's water but in the methodical implementation of ideas which reduce dependence on excessive water and also result in better long term agriculture. To reduce paddy cultivation in both states,

for example, will prevent depletion of soil nutrients and save water at the same time.

Finally if the quality of life is to improve for the smaller farmers then there are other reforms which must be given importance as well. Irrigation water must stop appearing to be the 'life or death' issue it is made out to be at present. Reforms such as more broad based industrial development and the fight against the increas-

ing spread of drugs and liquor are as important as the safe long use of agricultural land. To carry on indiscriminately along the same developmental path while paying attention only to the politics of the issues is not going to help the farmer. What matters is his economic and social development, and this is possible only through wiser methods of land and water use in the face of depleted resources, along with alternatives in industry.

Emerging Water Problems

Excerpted from *The State of India's Environment 1984-85, CSE.*

In low rainfall areas of Rajasthan and similar areas of Punjab and Haryana (300 mm to 400 mm), canal irrigation is necessary, because raising crops without irrigation is either not possible or uneconomical. Moreover, the groundwater is saline in many areas and hence the potential for tubewell irrigation is limited. The introduction of canals in these areas has resulted in a significant increase in yields of crops like cotton in the kharif season and wheat in the rabi. In semi-arid regions of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where rice and sugarcane are the main irrigated crops, increases in yields have been significant.

But in all these areas waterlogging and soil salinisation have emerged as serious problems. As far as unlined canals and distributaries are concerned, a study by the Central water and Power Commission in 1967 revealed that about 71 per cent of the water is lost in transit from the reservoir to the field.

Loss of water from unlined canals due to seepage (per cent)

Canals	15
Distributaries	7
Watercourses	22
Field Losses	27
Total Loss	71

Increasing waterlogging

The water table in the Bhakra canal command area has been rising at the rate of about one metre per year. The managing director of the Haryana State Minor Irrigation and Tubewell Corporation in a press conference in late 1983 expressed serious concern over the rising groundwater table in the state. He said that 65 per cent of the area in the state covered by canal commands had saline groundwater aquifers underneath and in 4 lakh hectares, the water table had entered the critical zone of up to 3 metres depth. This was creating waterlogging accompanied by salinisation.

The rising water table will affect the production of many crops adversely. The story of

canal irrigated areas of Pakistan where cotton has vanished from many fields, is likely to be repeated, says Bhumbra, former Vice Chancellor of Haryana Agricultural University. The high water table, apart from affecting agricultural productivity, has many other adverse effects. Because of the loss of moisture storing capacity of the soil, even slight rains cause floods. The maintenance of roads and buildings becomes difficult and diseases increase because of waterlogging. In Hissar in Haryana, the load bearing strength of the soil has become less than 50 per cent in 15 years.

In the sub-humid and humid areas of the country (rainfall more than 1,000 mm), Bhumbra argues that the benefits of canal irrigation are questionable even in the short run. In fact, in many areas, introduction of canals has resulted in reduction in productivity of crops. In Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, which together have 2.5 million hectares of canal irrigated area, and where rice is the main irrigated crop, the yield per hectare is not only less than one tonne, but there has been no perceptible increase for the last 20 years. In Uttar Pradesh, which has the maximum canal irrigated area, there is a general complaint that in the canal irrigated area, apart from pre-sowing irrigation, hardly one irrigation is possible and the wheat crop frequently suffers from moisture stress.

During the drought of 1979-80, the farmers in the Sarda Sahayak command area complained there was no water in the canal but in the wet year of 1978, the canal water aggravated the flood problem created by excessive rain. In the rice growing area, water is seldom available for raising rice nurseries before the start of the monsoon

rains. Thus, in the non-rainy season, winter or summer, when irrigation could result in significant increases in yield, enough water is not available.

Further, in the humid areas, it becomes difficult to manage canal water during the rainy season and the problem of water logging becomes serious in a much shorter time. In fact, this may aggravate the problem of drainage and result in loss of production.

The situation is likely to be much worse as canal irrigation is introduced in high rainfall areas particularly if the soils have low permeability as has been demonstrated by the situation in Tawa and Barna command areas, where yields of all crops have declined since the introduction of canals. Bhumbra, therefore concludes: "The effect of canal irrigation on increasing cropping intensity is marginal". He argues that the irrigation departments do not even produce relevant data to show the cropping intensity in lands irrigated by canals and tubewells. All that we know is that in 1976-77, the net irrigated area was 43.1 million hectares, which gives a cropping intensity of 1.24 which is very low and a good reason for the low productivity of irrigated lands in India.

Bhumbra argues that in most canal irrigated areas cropping intensity is less than that in tubewell irrigated areas, generally two or more. In other words, a substantial increase in food production in the last decade or so has actually come from tubewell irrigated areas. Bhumbra argues that the government should concentrate on groundwater development and management of rain water by storing it in catchment areas in small reservoirs instead of canal irrigation schemes.



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